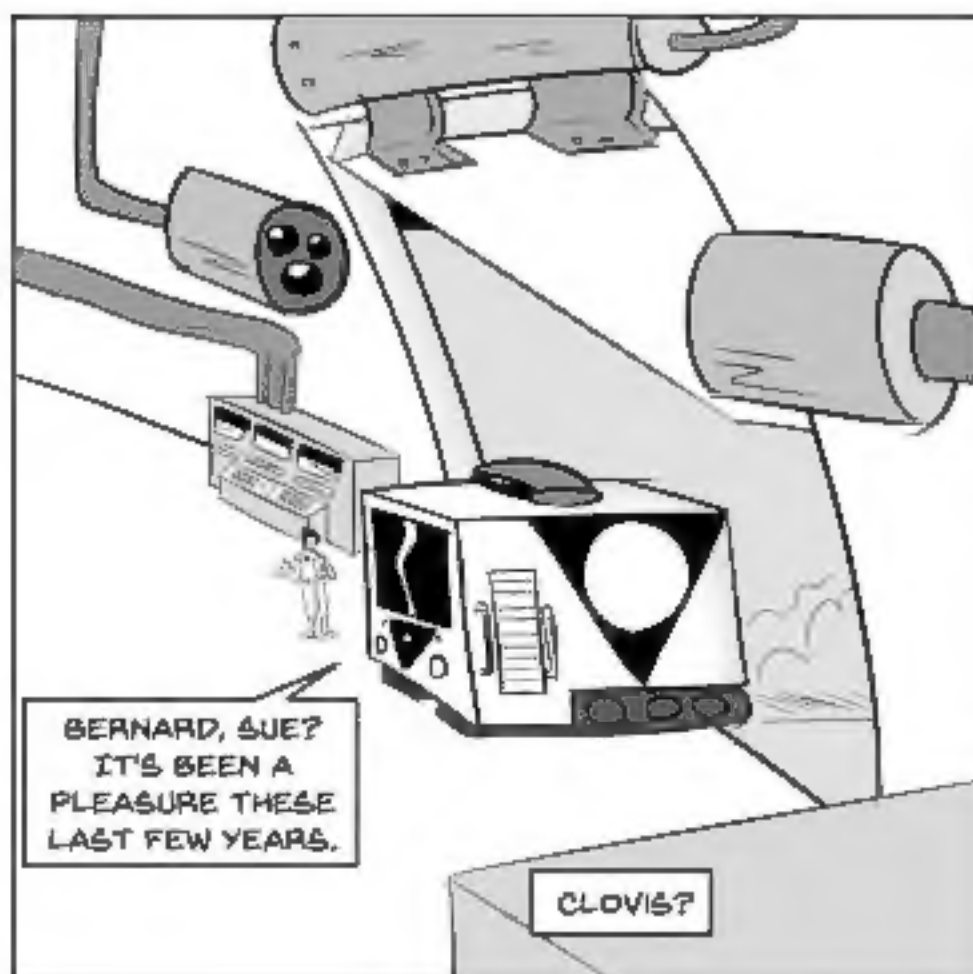
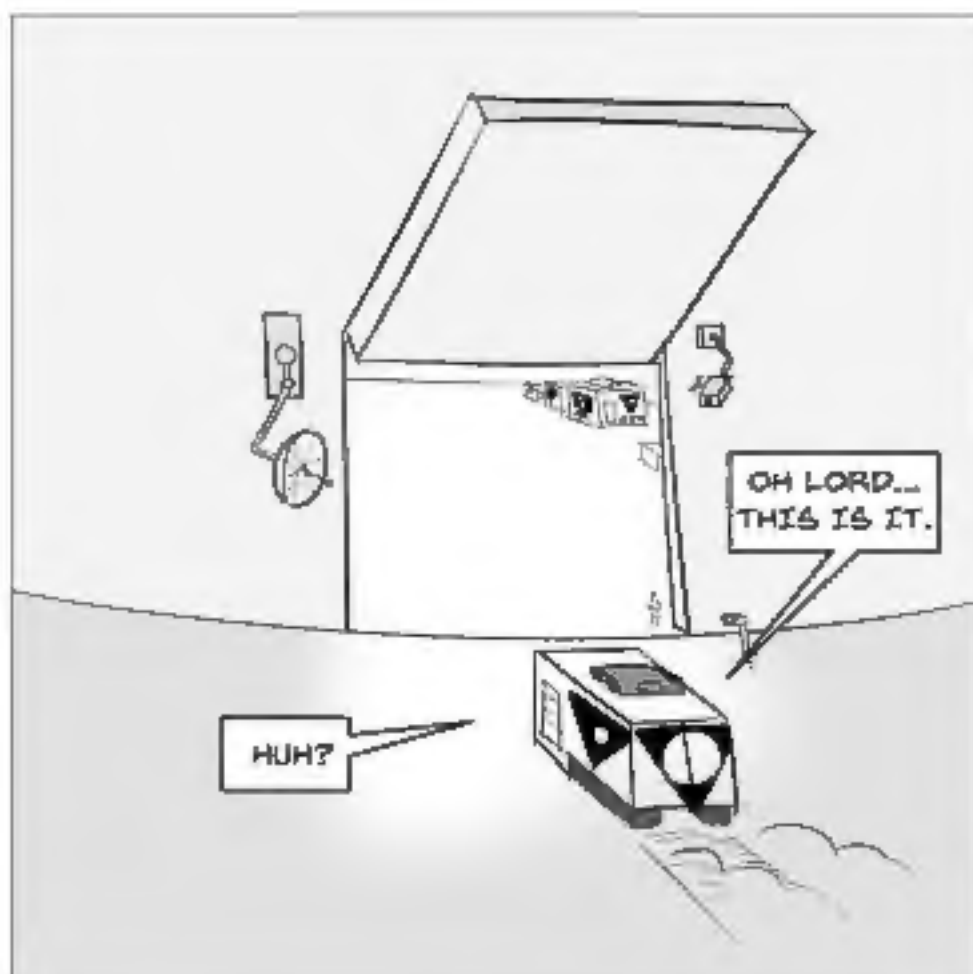




TOPSIDE TALES



YOU'RE ALWAYS SO **POSITIVE** BERNARD.
SO VERY **TRUSTING** OF THE HIGHER UPS.

BUT YOU AND ME?

WE'RE **IMPERFECT**.
THERE'S SOMETHING
WRONG WITH US THEY
WANT TO GET **RID** OF.



IF IT'S A PRIOR **DISABILITY**, DISTURBING MEDICAL
HISTORY, OR **UNWANTED** BEHAVIORAL ISSUES
THEY DON'T WANT IT **OR** US IN THE GENE POOL...

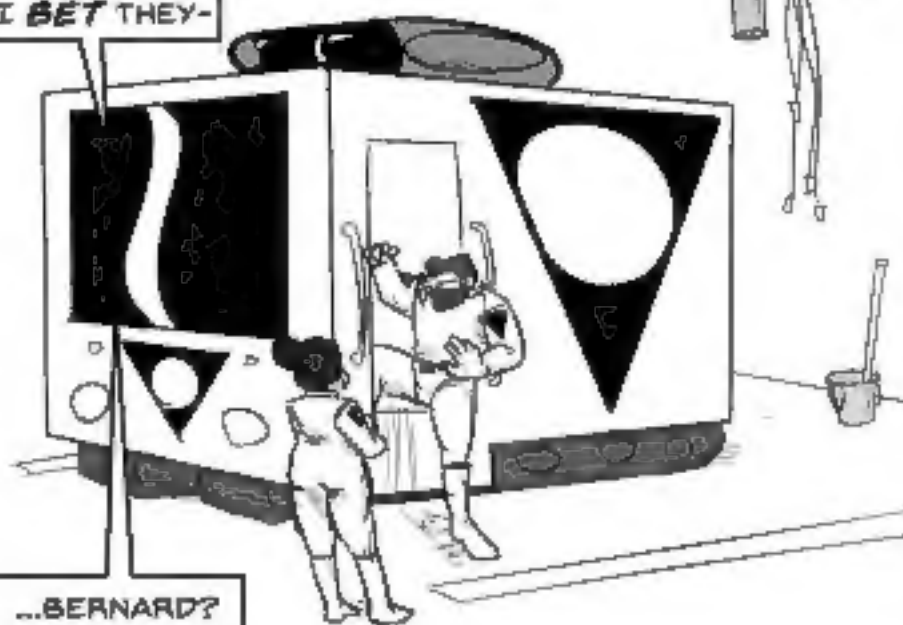
THAT'S WHY THEY PUT US ON
THESE MISSIONS.

IT'S AN EXCUSE TO PURGE
US **WITHOUT** MAKING A
BIG SHOW OF IT...



THE END OF THE WORLD HAPPENS AND YOU'D THINK
THAT **PRESERVING** WHAT'S LEFT OF HUMANITY
WOULD BE THE PRIORITY INSTEAD OF A EUGENICS
PROJECT FOR THE HIGHER UPS.

I **BET** THEY-



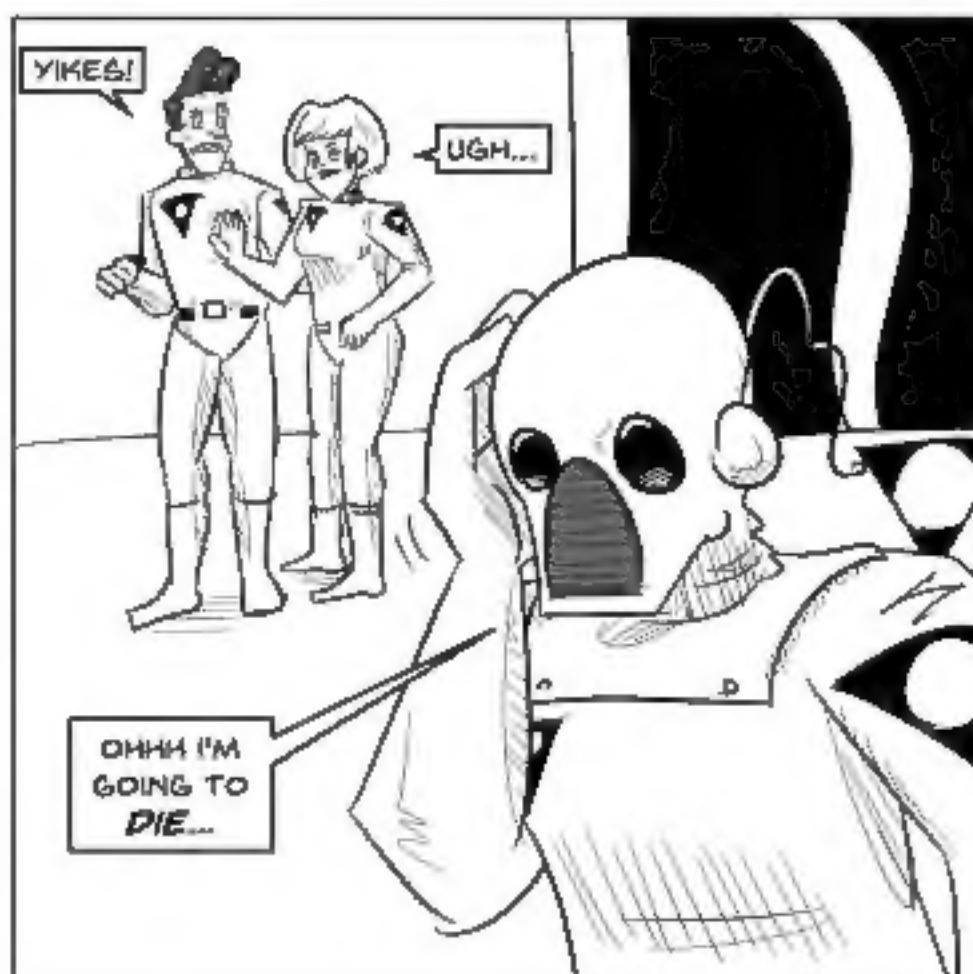
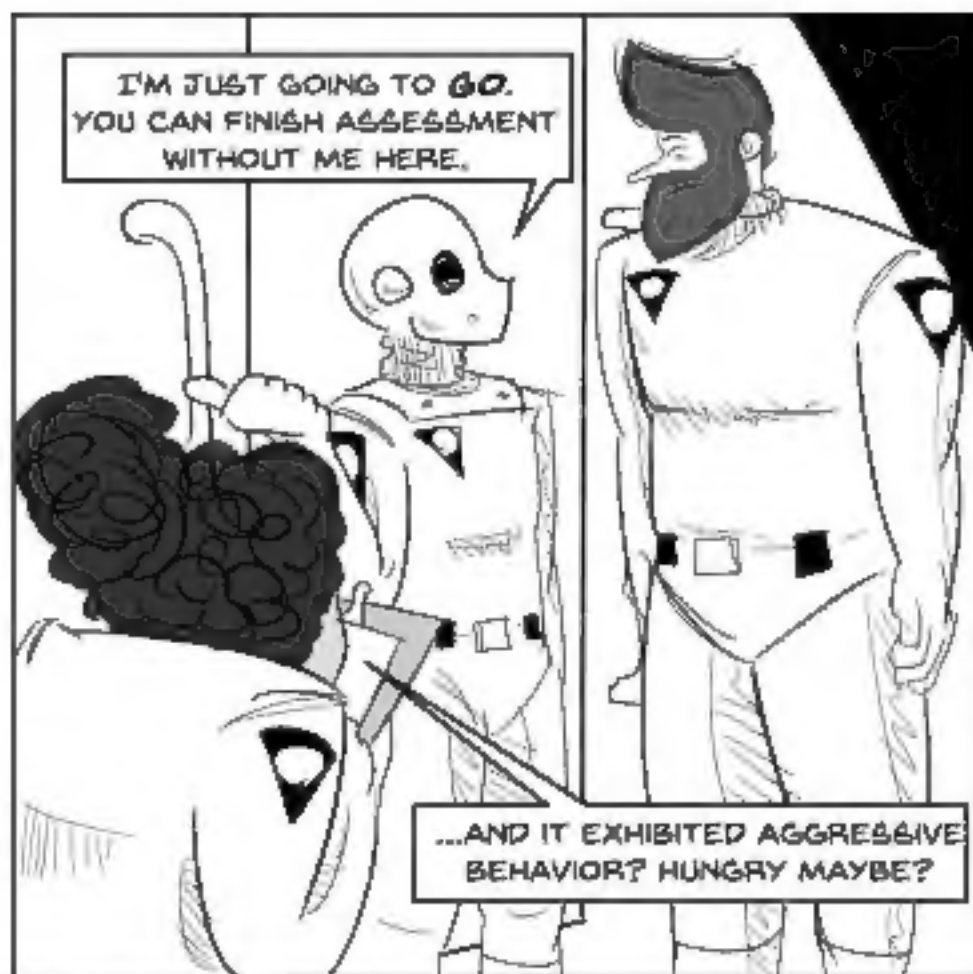
...BERNARD?

HEY MARIA! MUST BE MY
LUCKY DAY TO HAVE
YOU ON THIRD SHIFT!

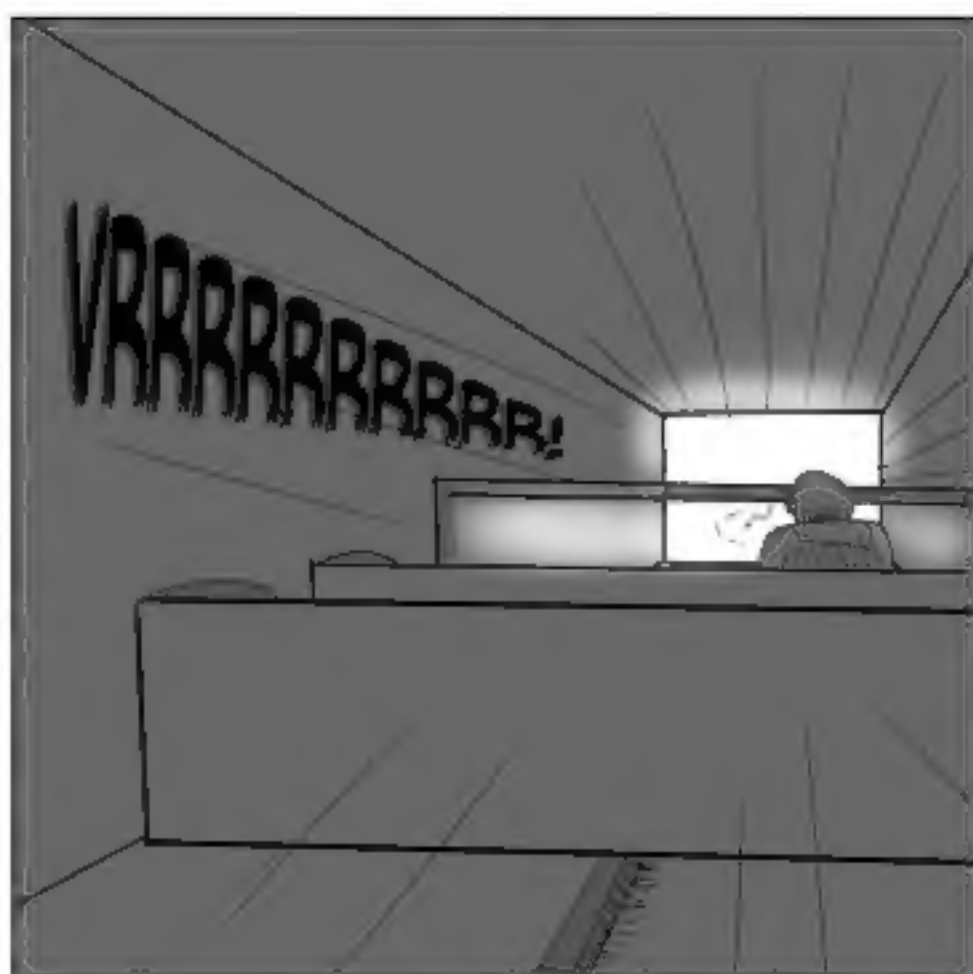
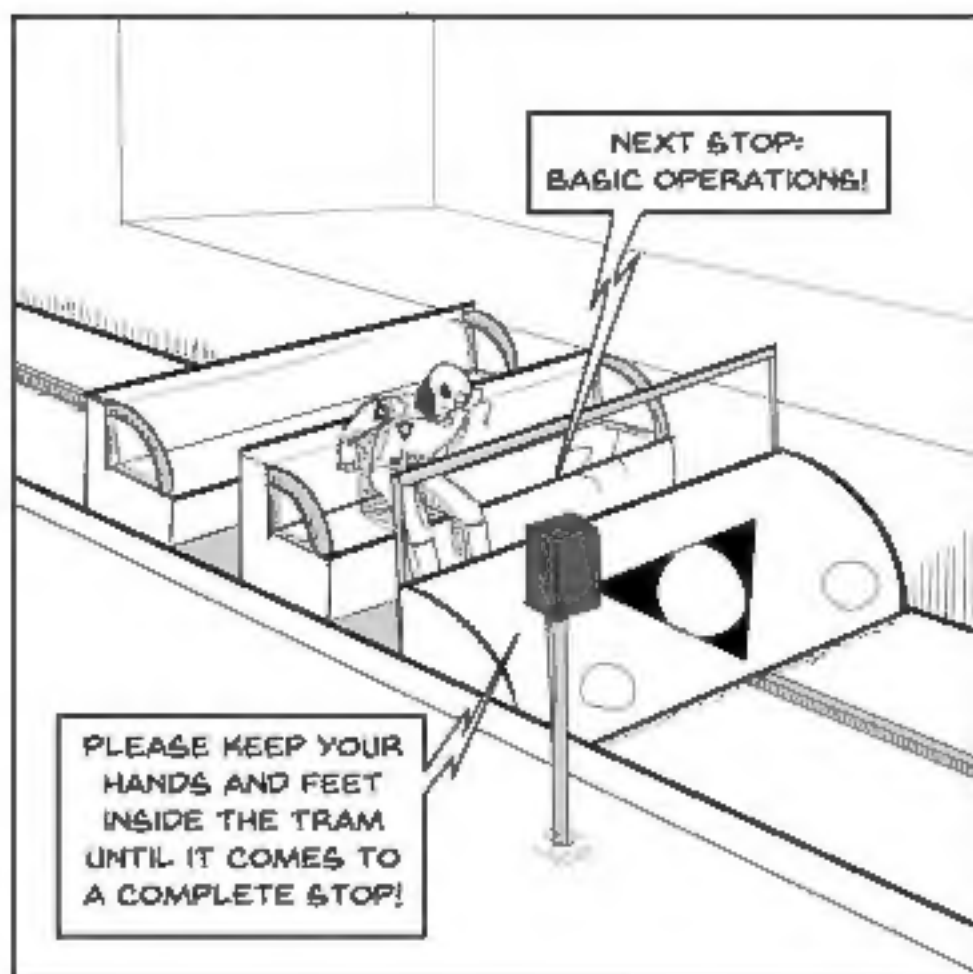
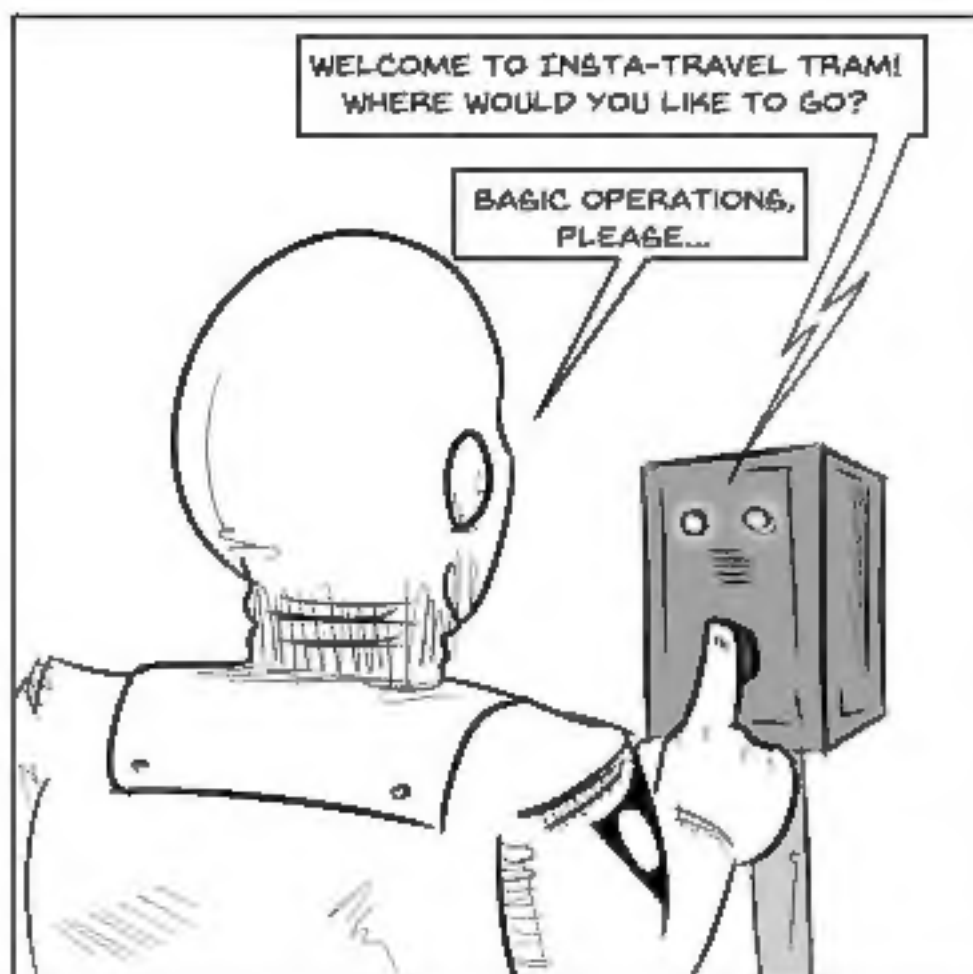


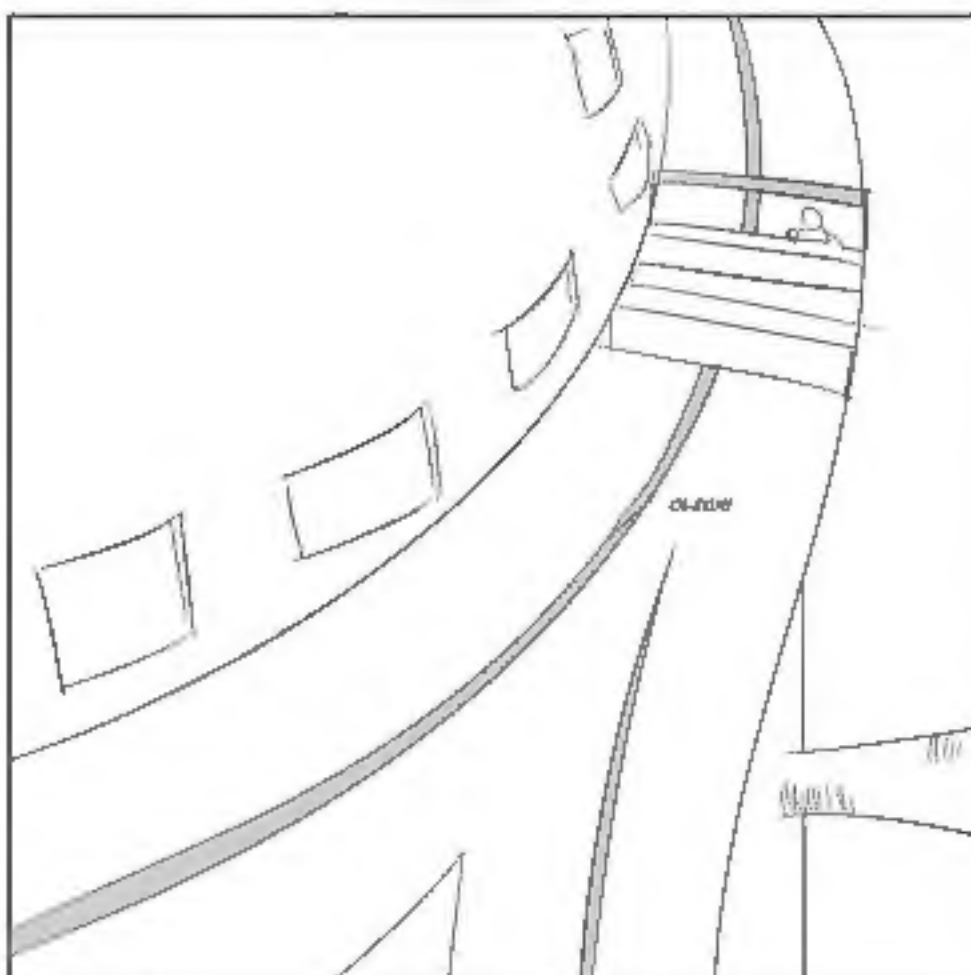
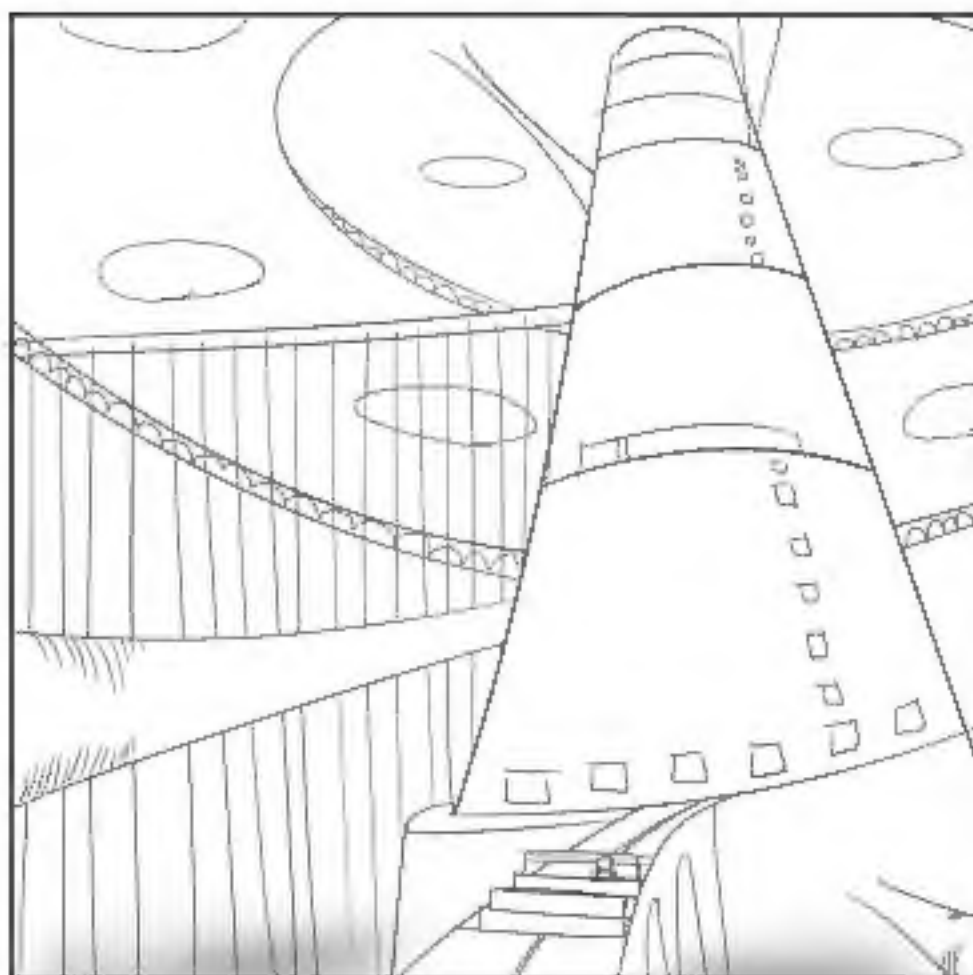
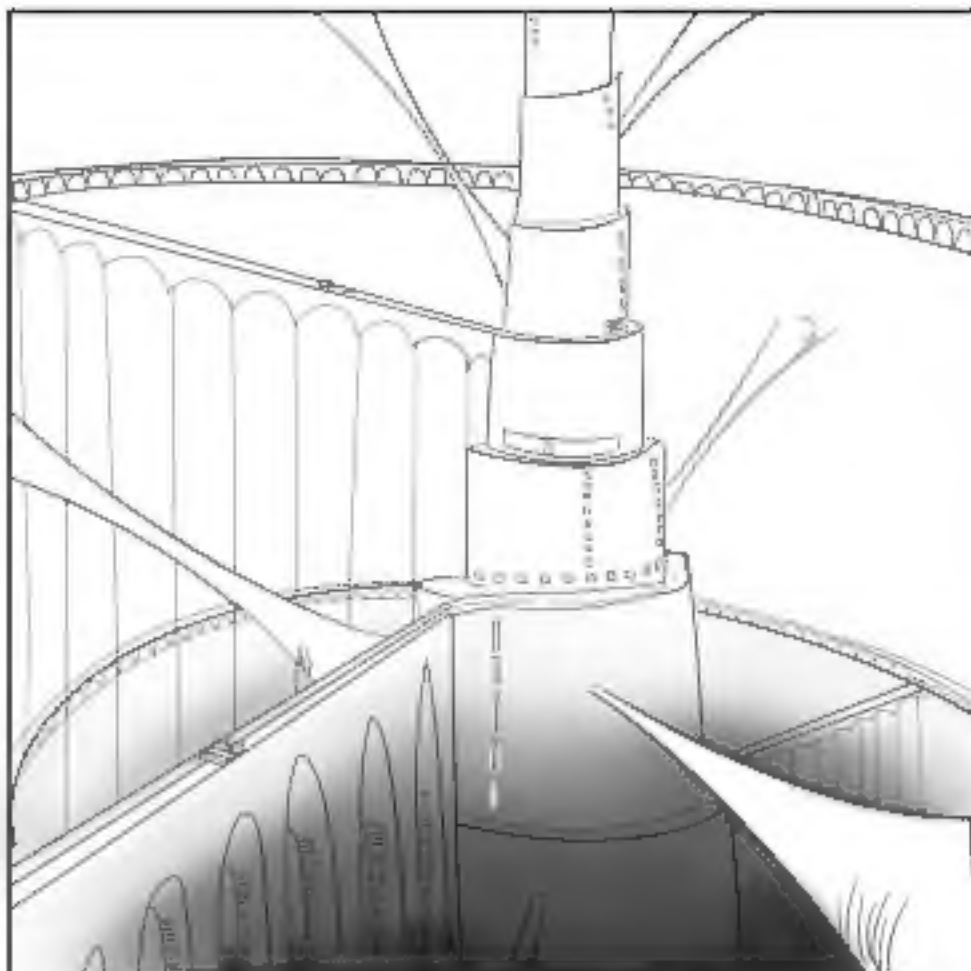
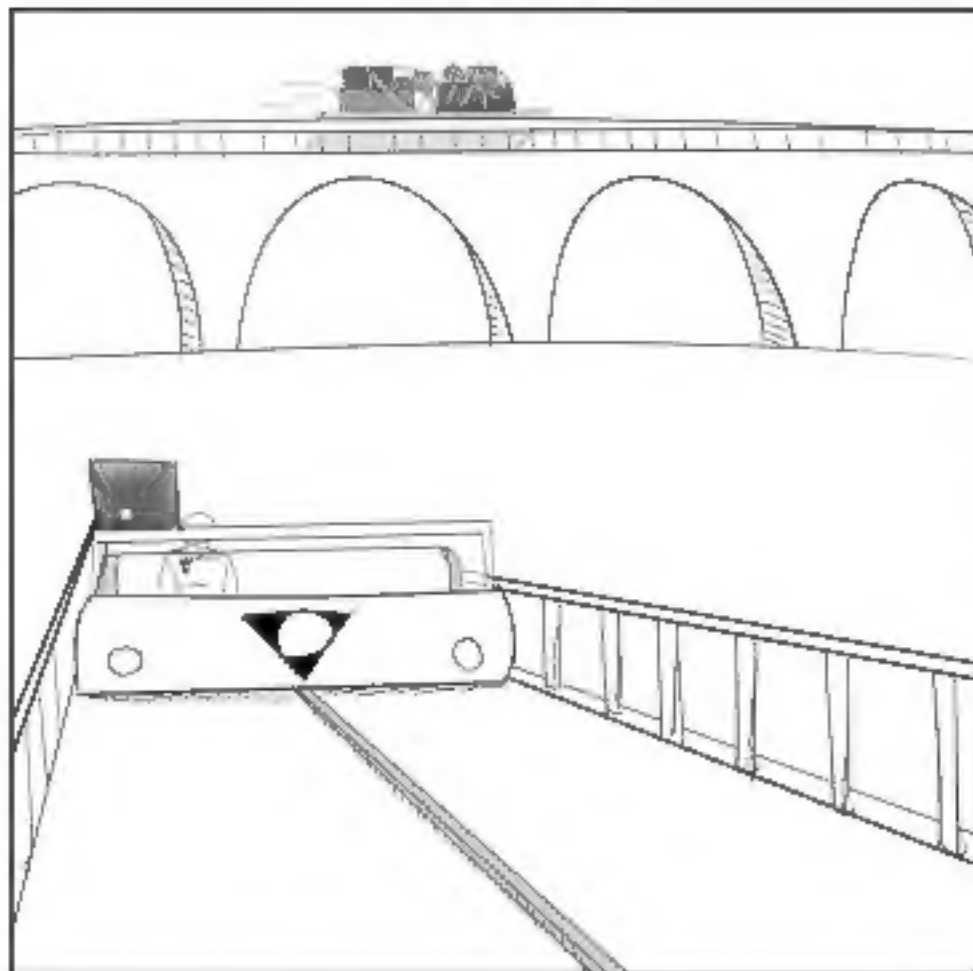


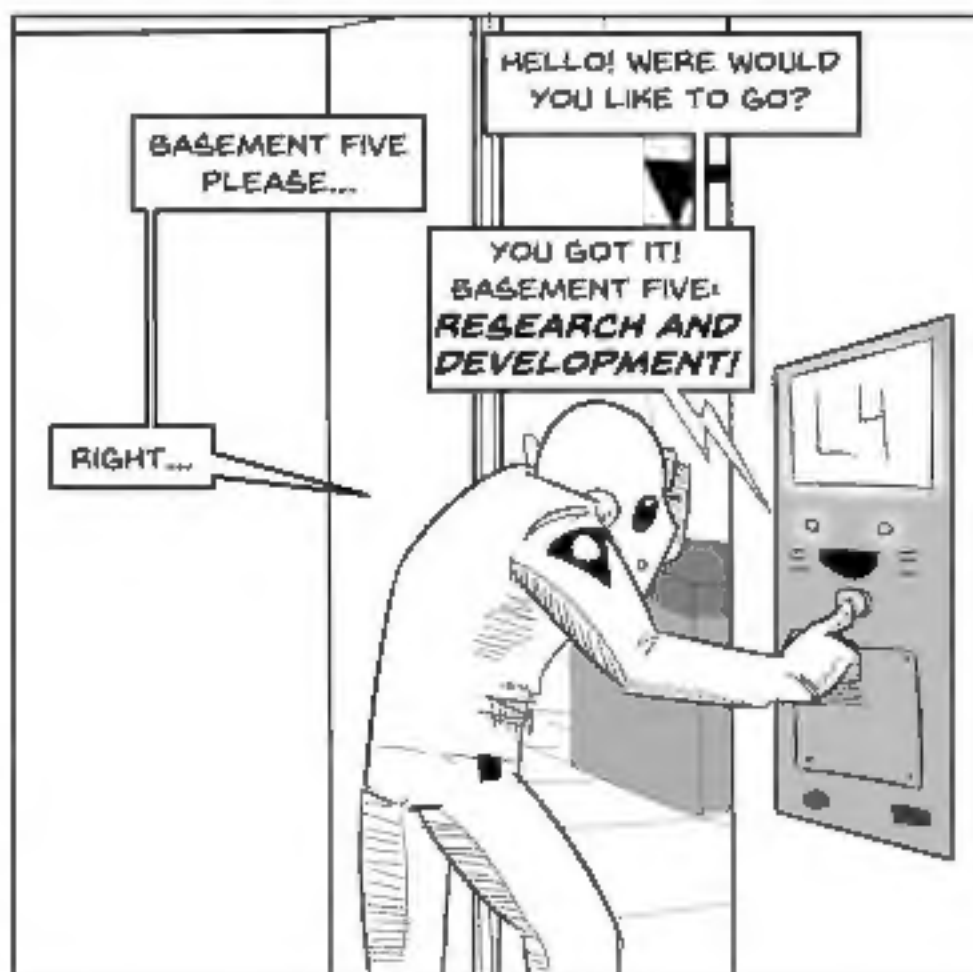
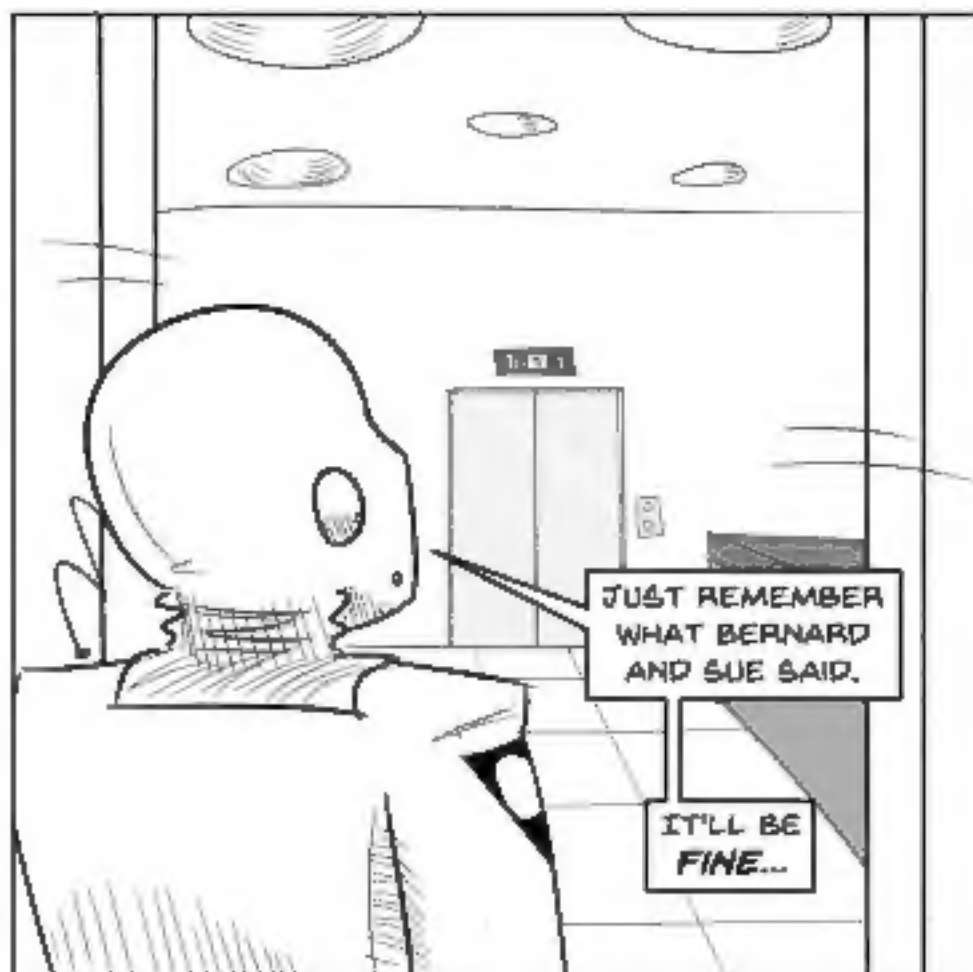
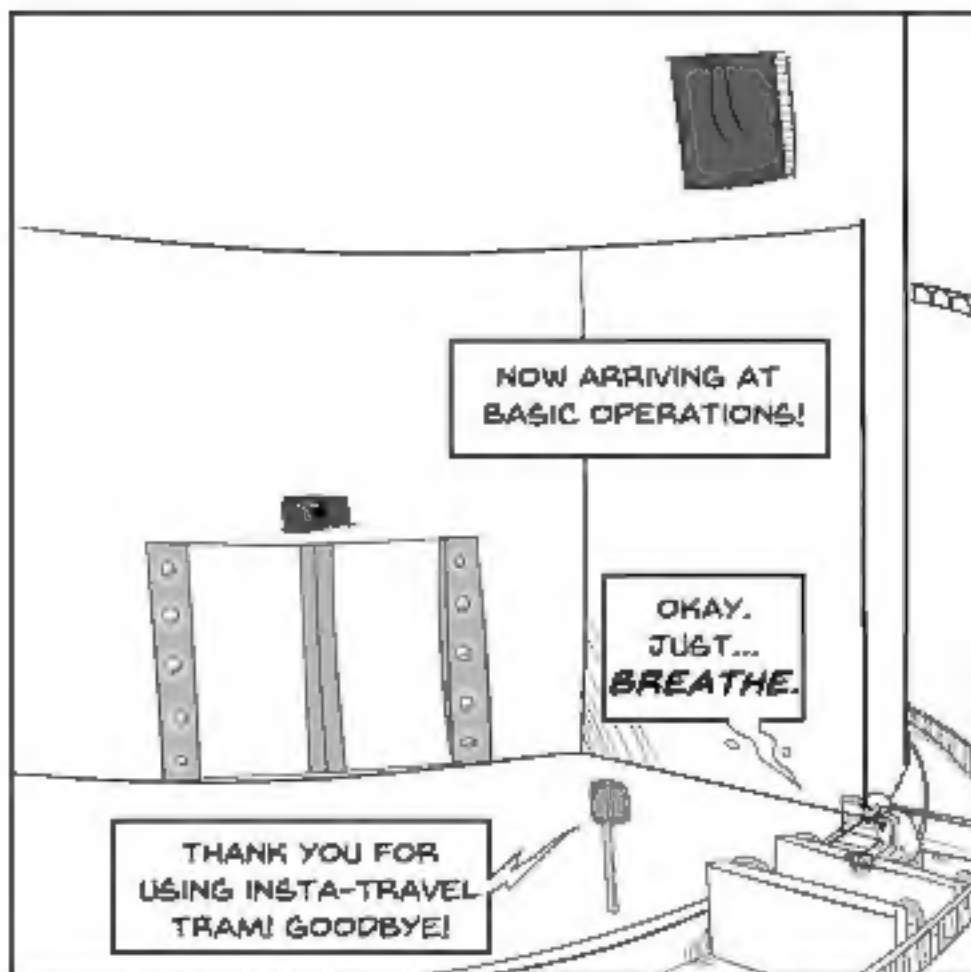


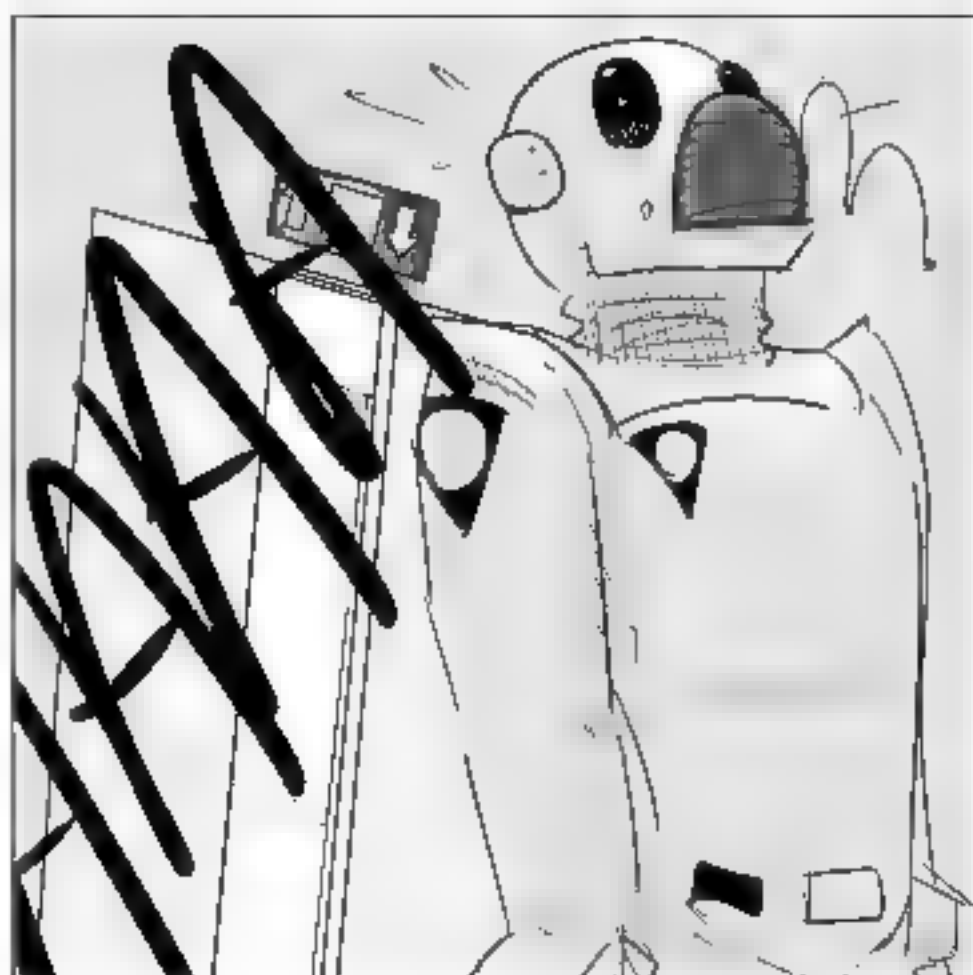
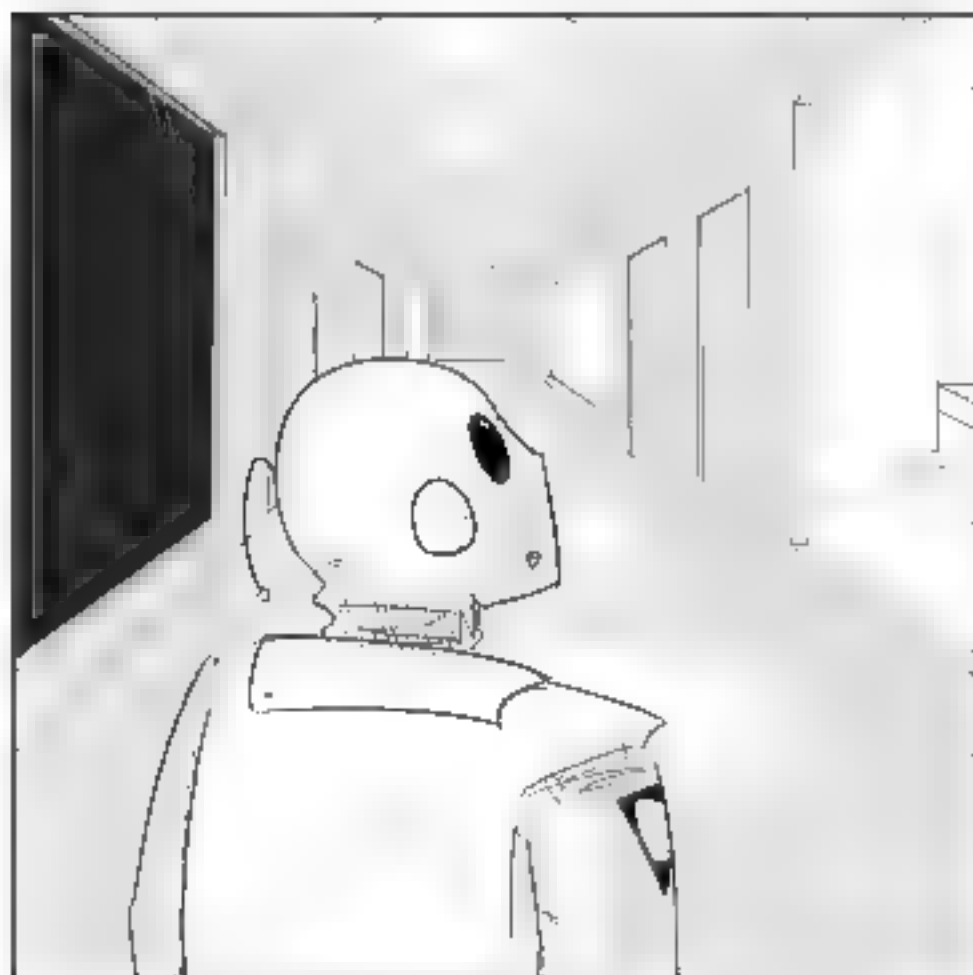
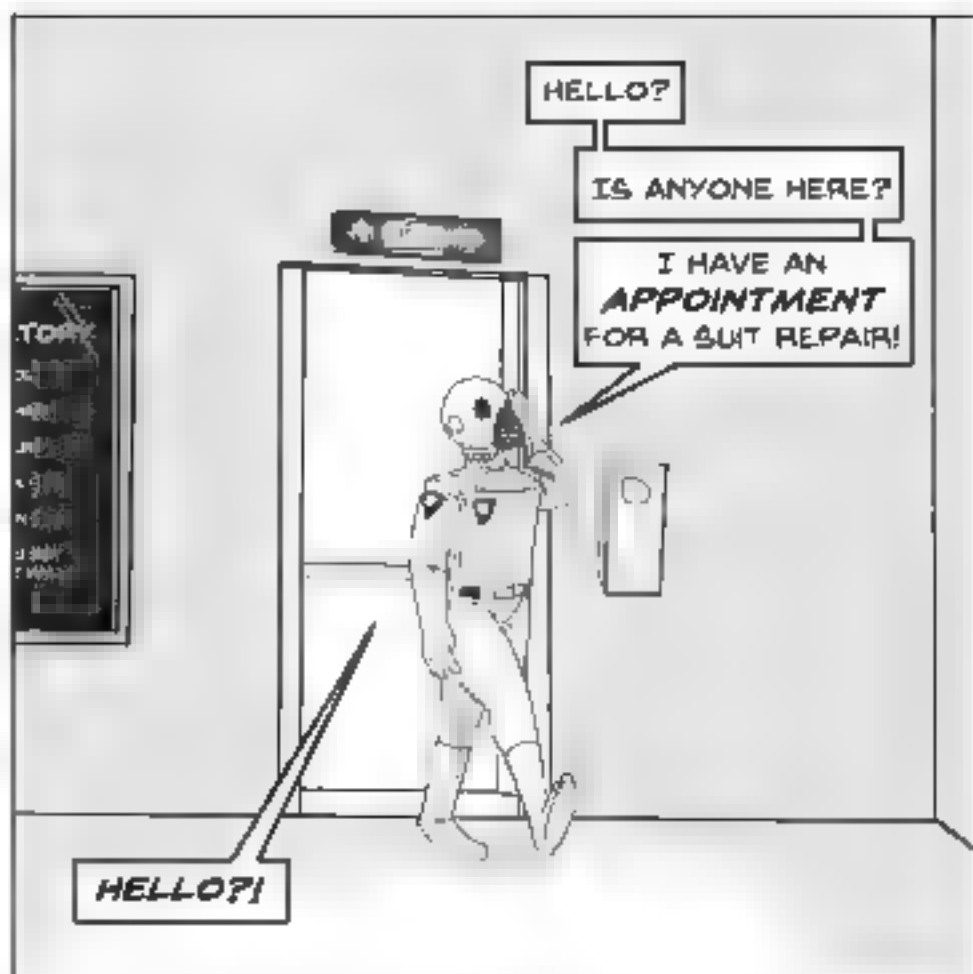
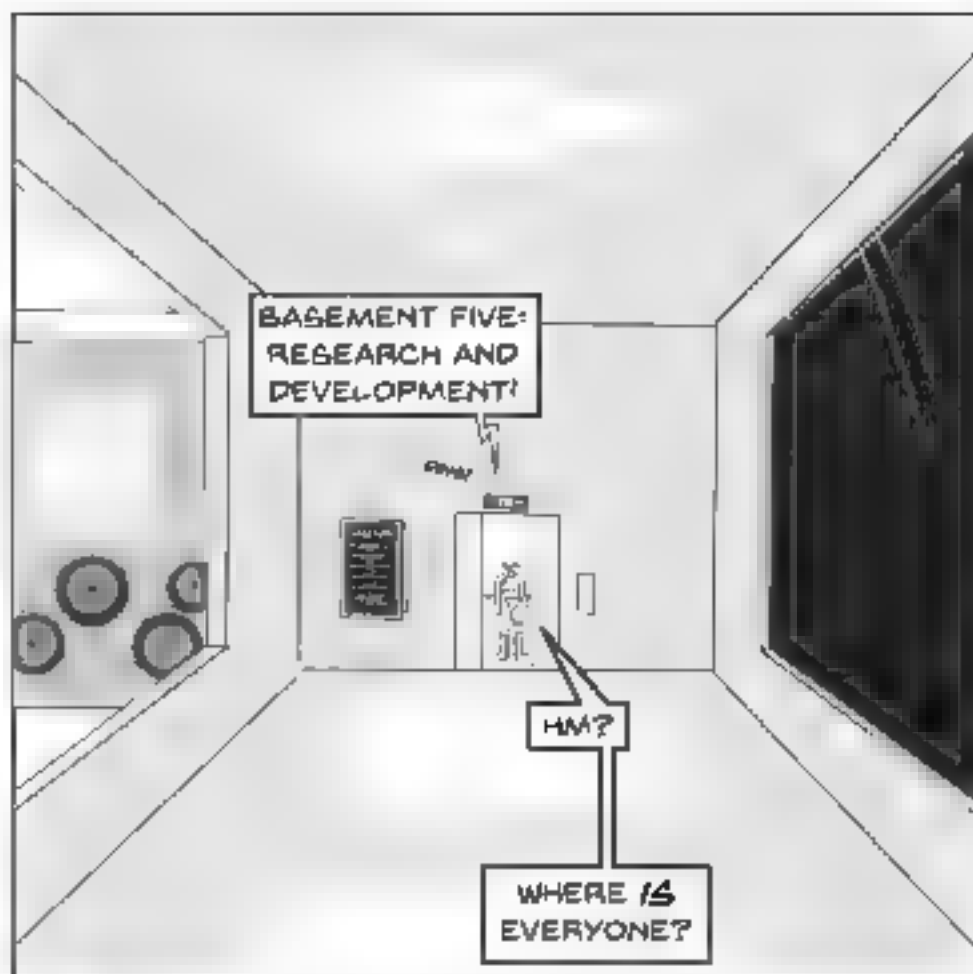






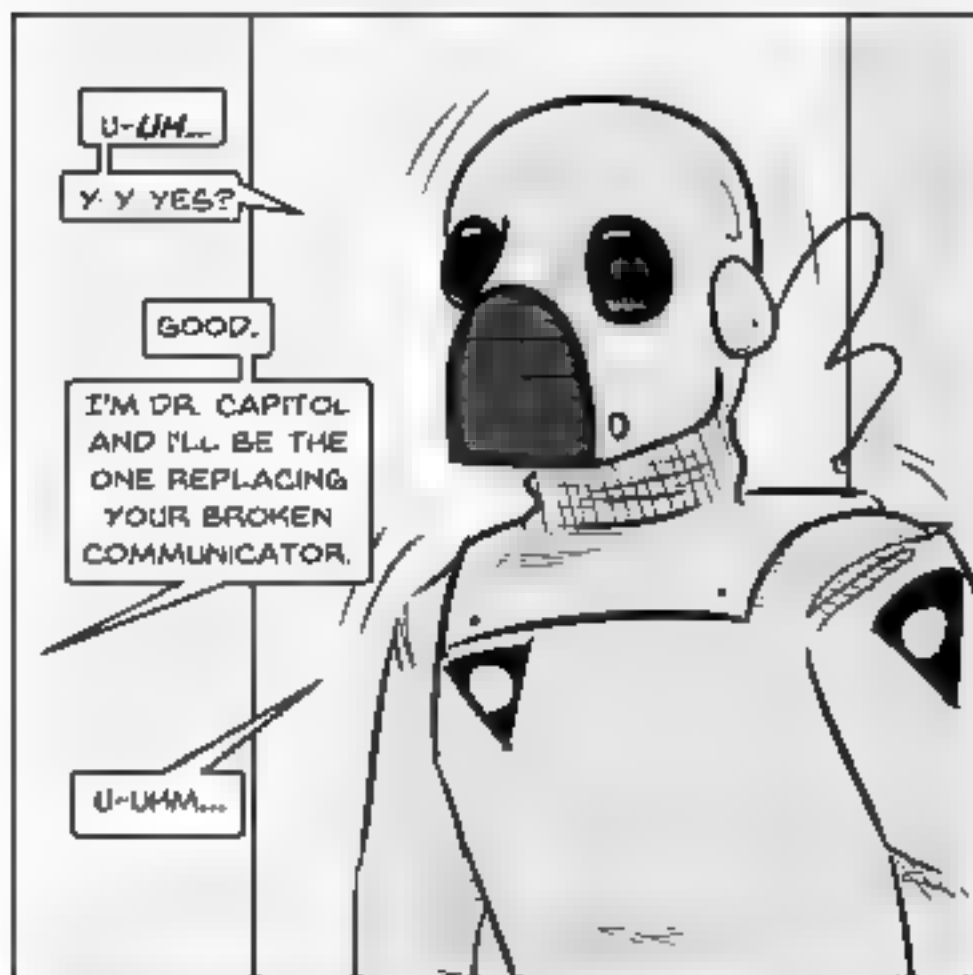


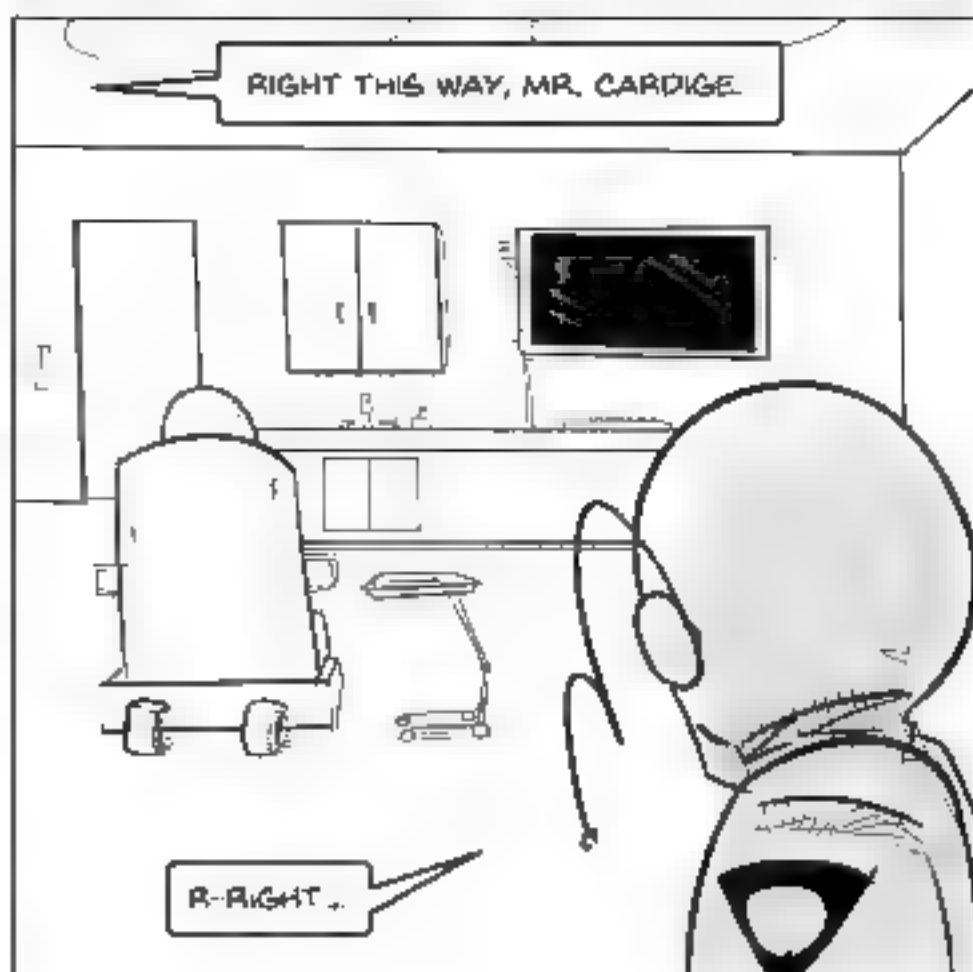












SO...DR. CAPITOL, WAS IT?

MMHMM!

WHY WAS I CALLED DOWN **HERE** TO R&D FOR A NEW COMMUNICATOR INSTEAD OF SUIT REPAIR?

WELL MR. CARDIGE, IT'S NOT EVERY DAY ANYONE JUST **BREAKS** THEIR COMMUNICATOR WHILE OUT ON A JOB

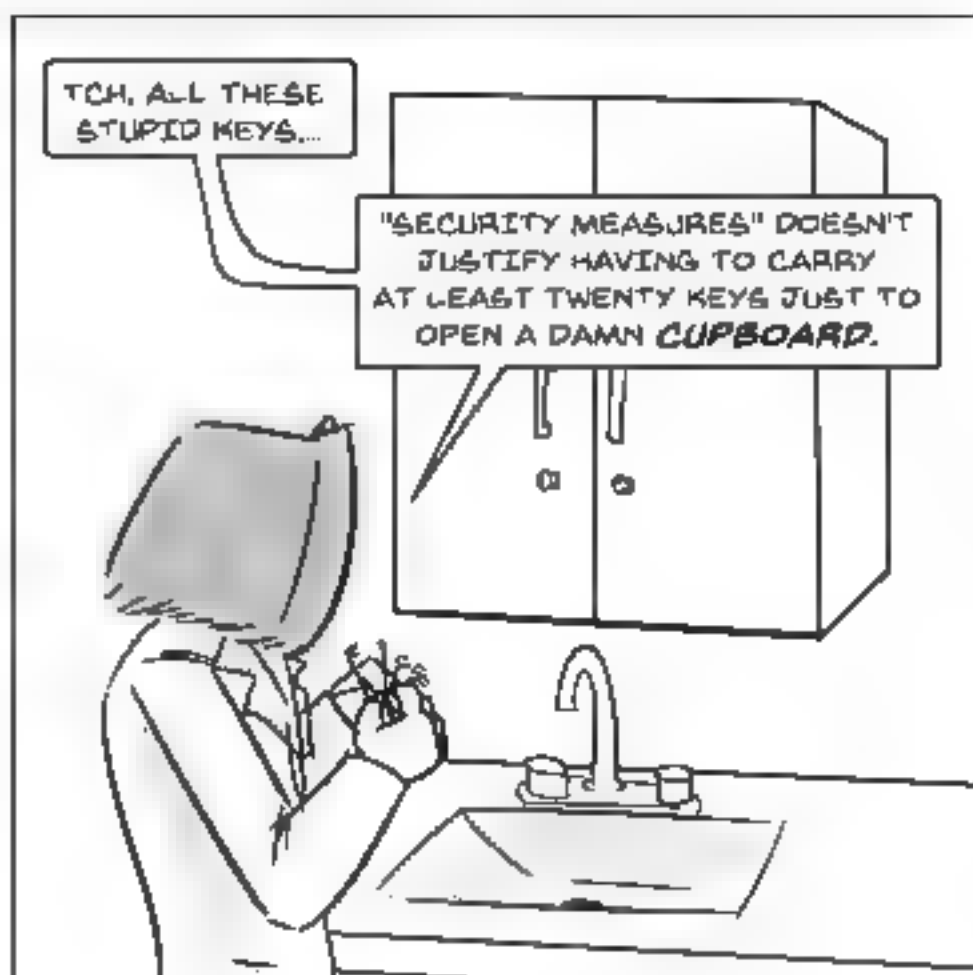
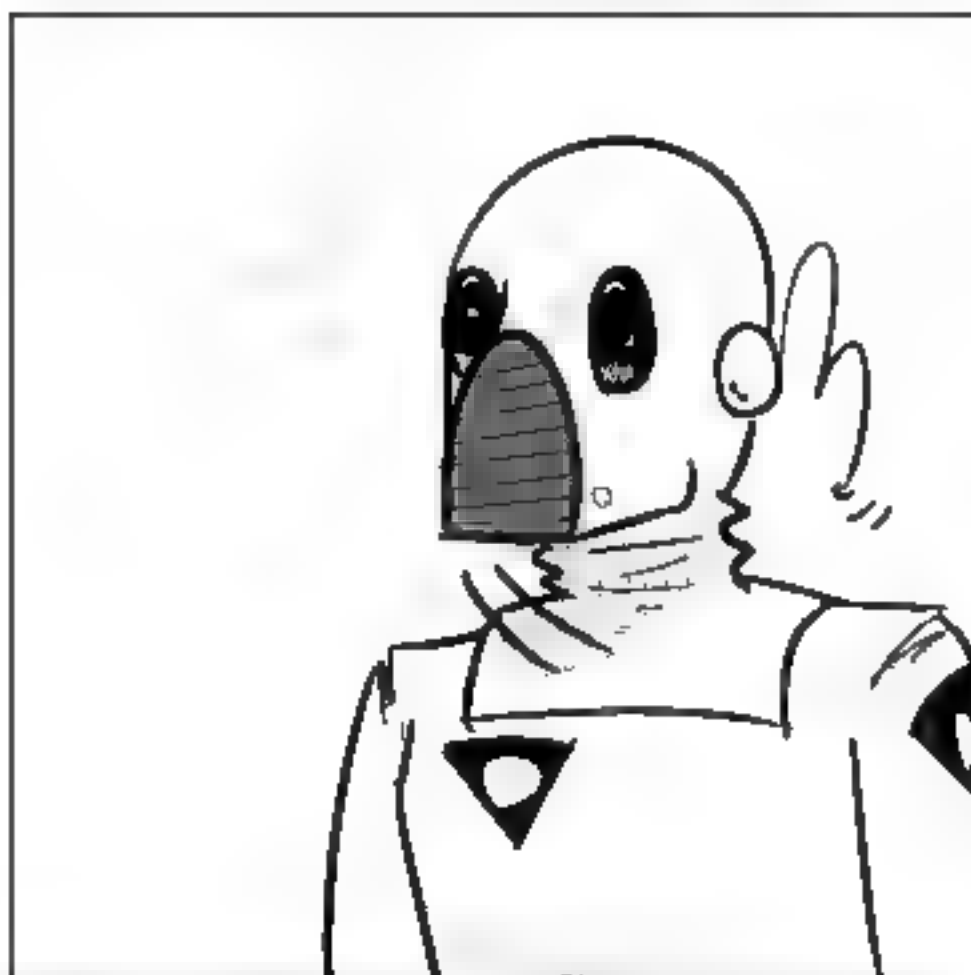
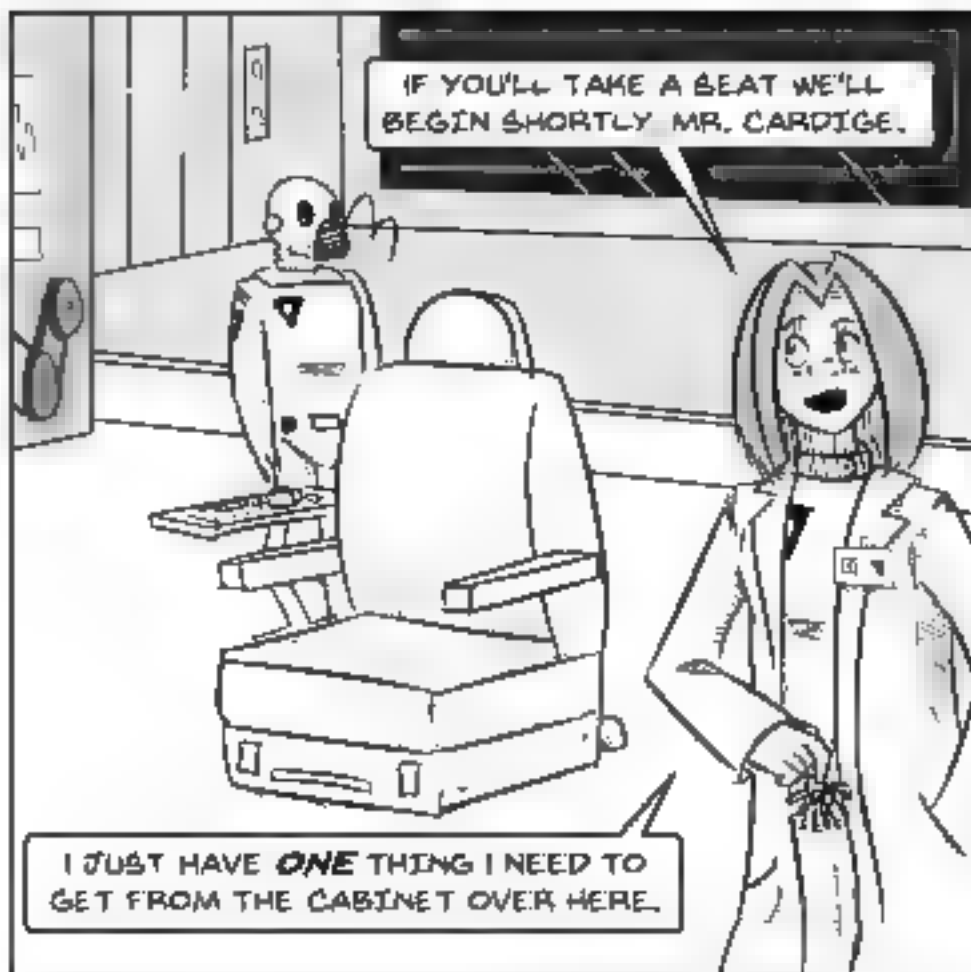
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO **TEST** SOMETHING BUT I HAD TO WAIT UNTIL THE OPPORTUNITY AROSE FOR IT.

WHY NOT **ASK** SOMEONE TO TEST IT FOR YOU INSTEAD OF CALLING SOMEONE LIKE **ME** IN, THEN?

WHOOSH

BE HONEST MR. CARDIGE, WOULD **ANYONE** COME DOWN HERE IF THEY **DIDN'T** HAVE TO?

DING!



SO... WHAT'S SO IMPORTANT ABOUT THAT CABINET ANYWAY?

ALL **SENSITIVE MATERIALS** HAVE TO BE LOCKED IN THESE CABINETS INSIDE APEX LABORATORIES.

THERE'S ALL SORTS OF JUNK IN THESE THINGS, OLD PROTOTYPE WEAPONRY, ZERO SCALPELS, CORROSIVE CHEMICALS, YOU NAME IT WE GOT IT.

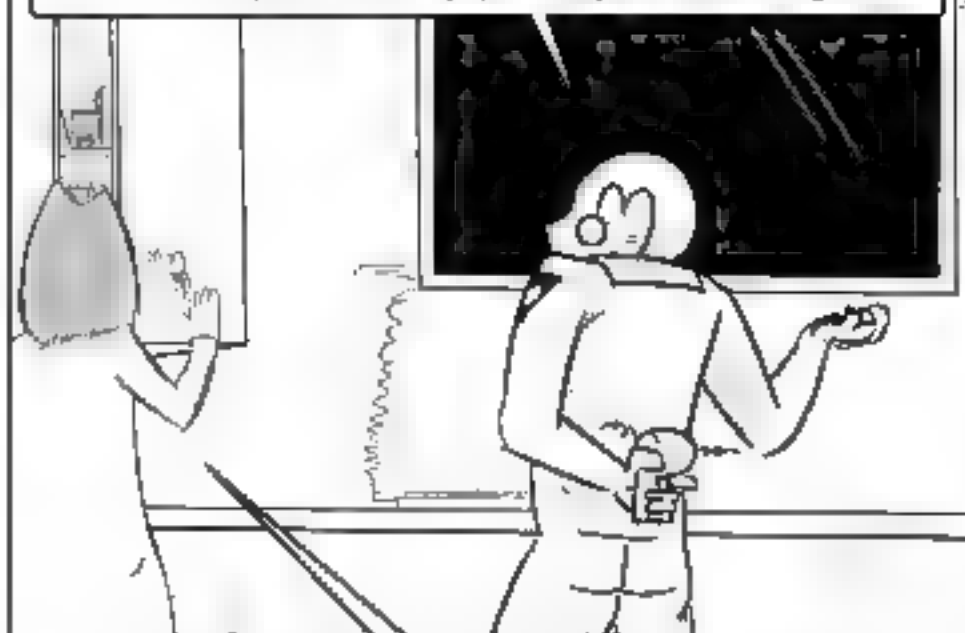
USED TO BE WE HAD THIS STUFF SITTING OUT BUT AFTER THE **HILLSIDE HQ INCIDENT**, WELL...

FINALLY!

OF COURSE THIS HAD TO BE GHOVED ALL THE WAY AT THE BACK ON THE **TOP SHELF!**

I SWEAR, I KNOW I'M SHORT BUT COME ON!

NOT TO JUMP BACK TOO MUCH IN THE CONVERSATION
BUT WHAT DOES AN INCIDENT AT *HILLSIDE* HAVE
TO DO WITH LOCKING UP THESE MATERIALS?



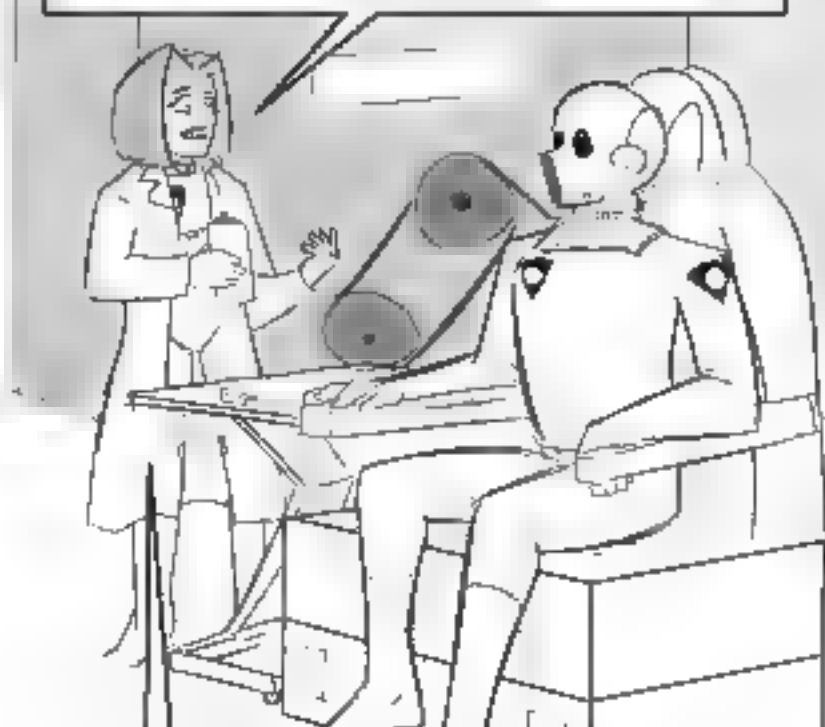
WELL, A MUTANT GOT THEIR PAWS ON A ZERO
SCALPEL AND ENDED UP *MUTATING* AT LEAST FIVE
PEOPLE THERE. IT APPARENTLY WAS *AWFUL*...

IT *DOES* SOUND PRETTY *AWFUL*....



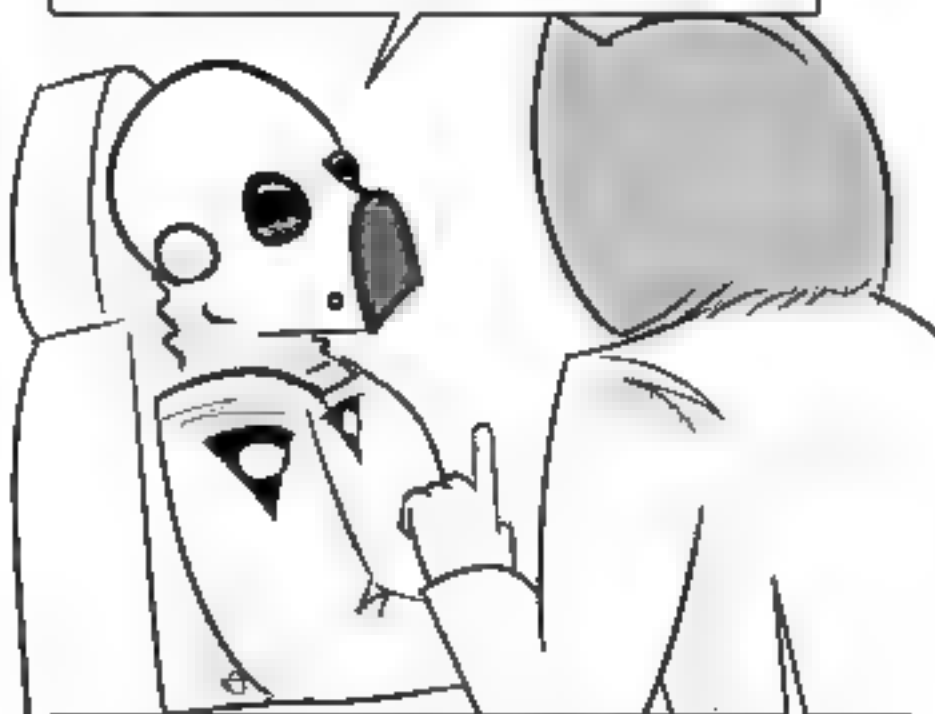
THAT'S WHY WE HAVE TO LOCK EVERYTHING UP.

THOSE MUTANTS TAKE *ANY* OPPORTUNITY!

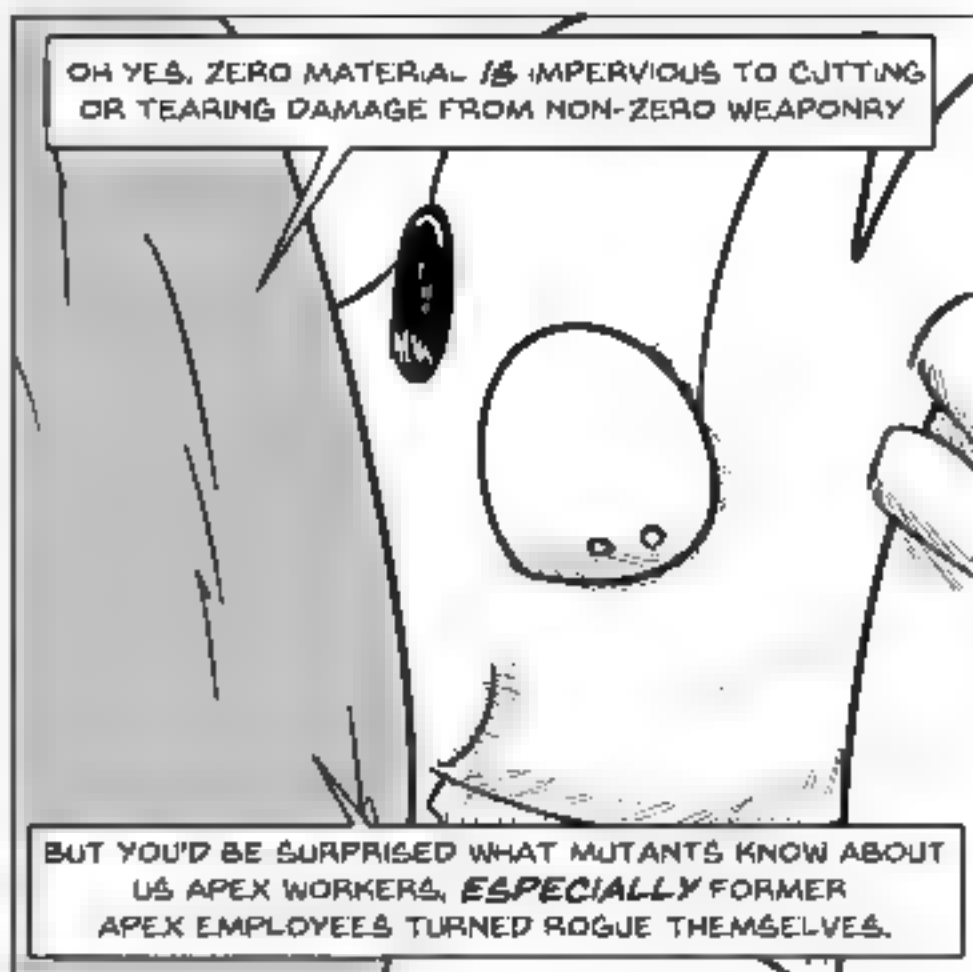
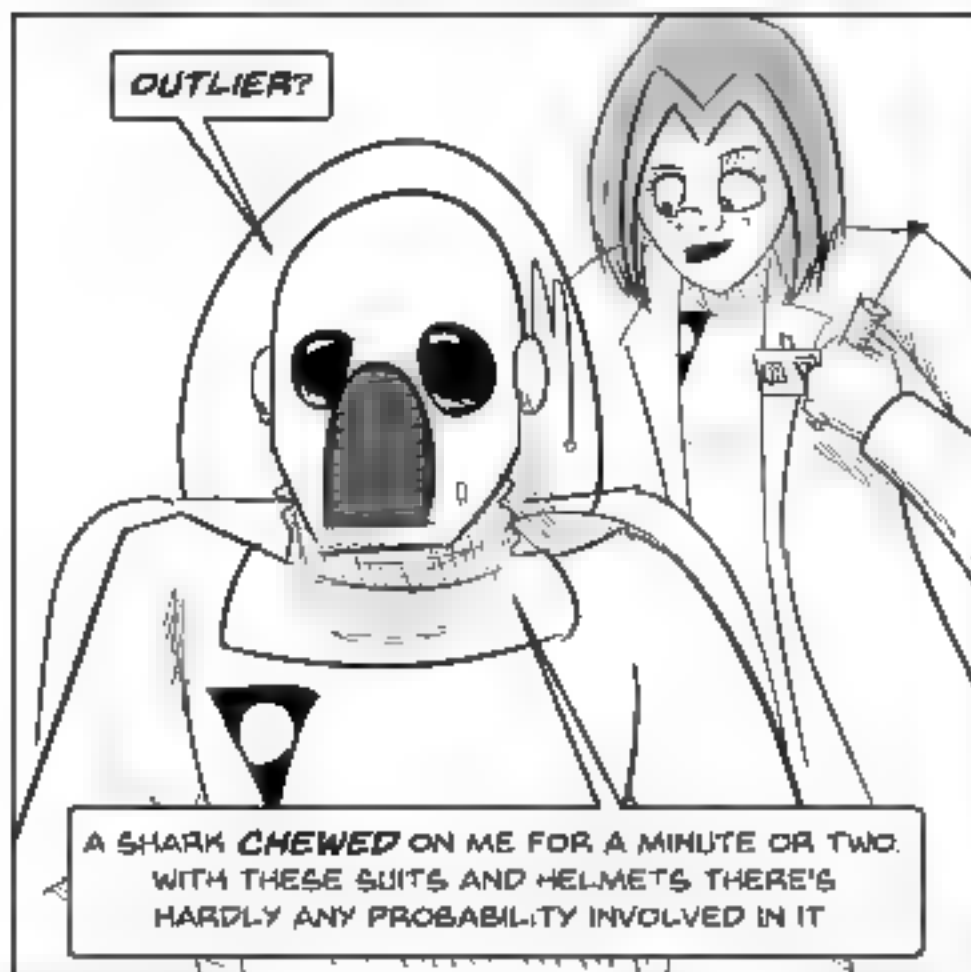
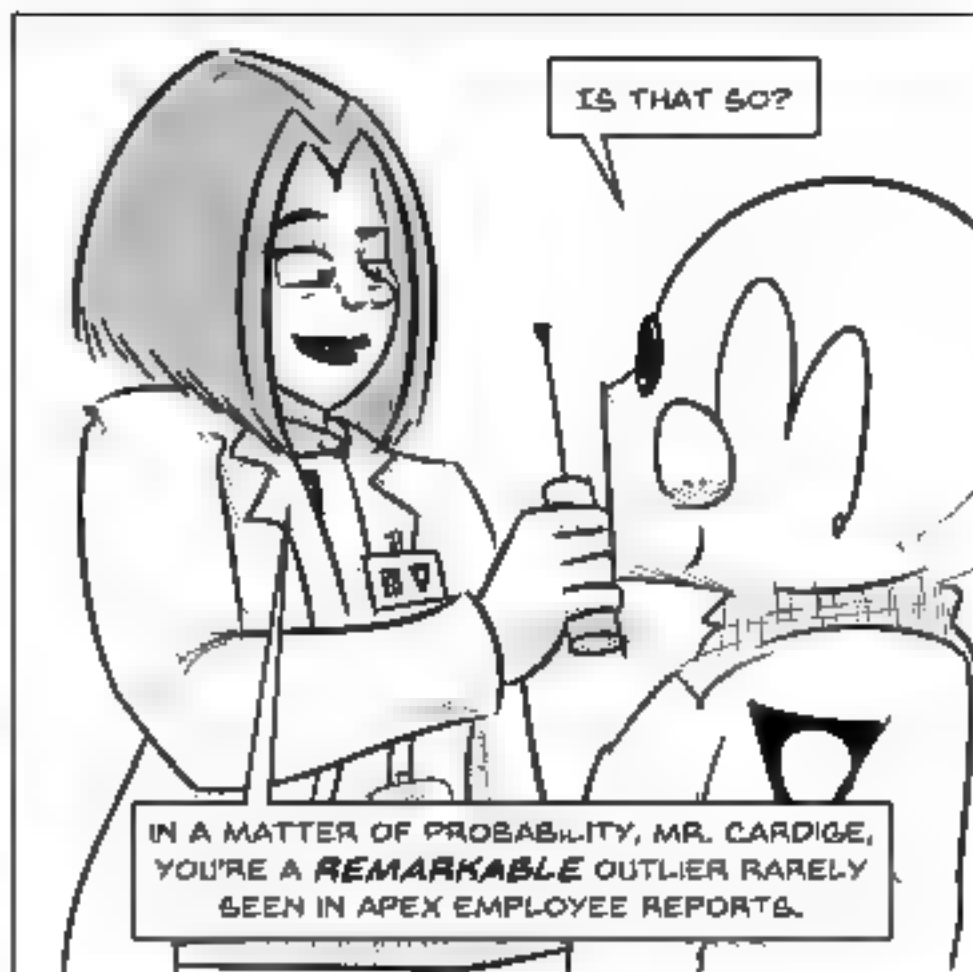


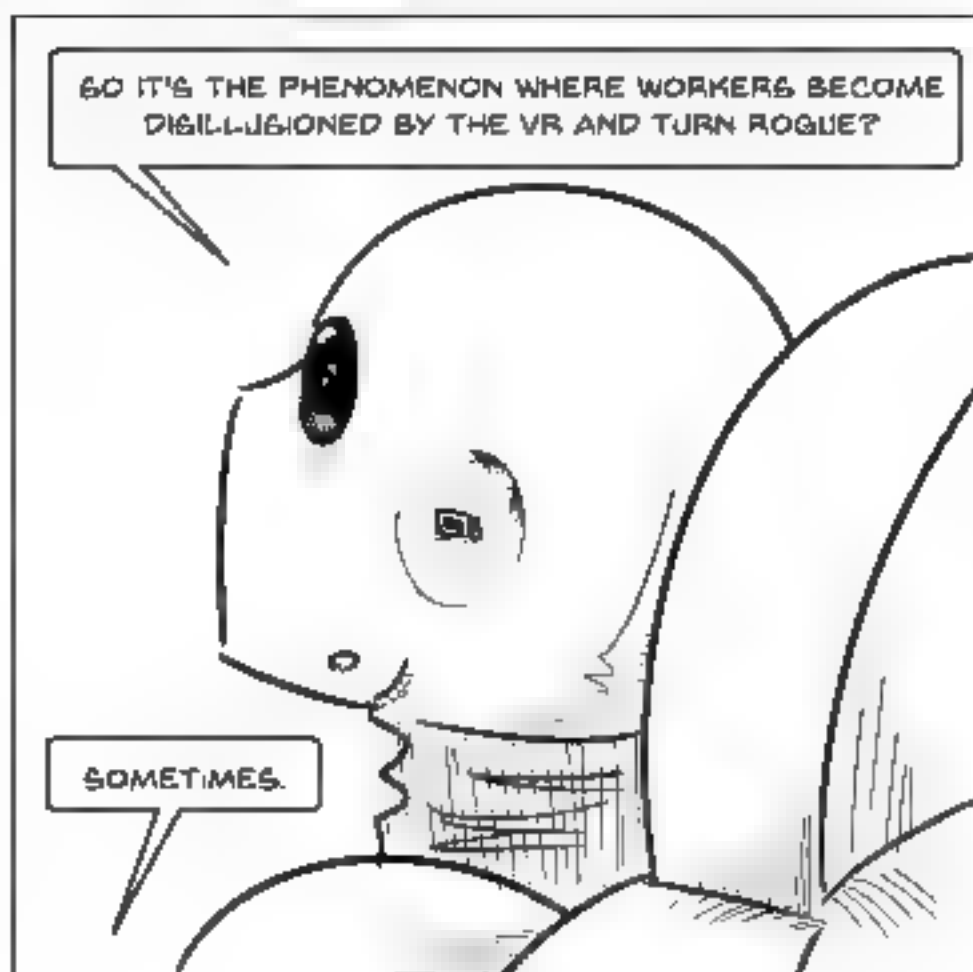
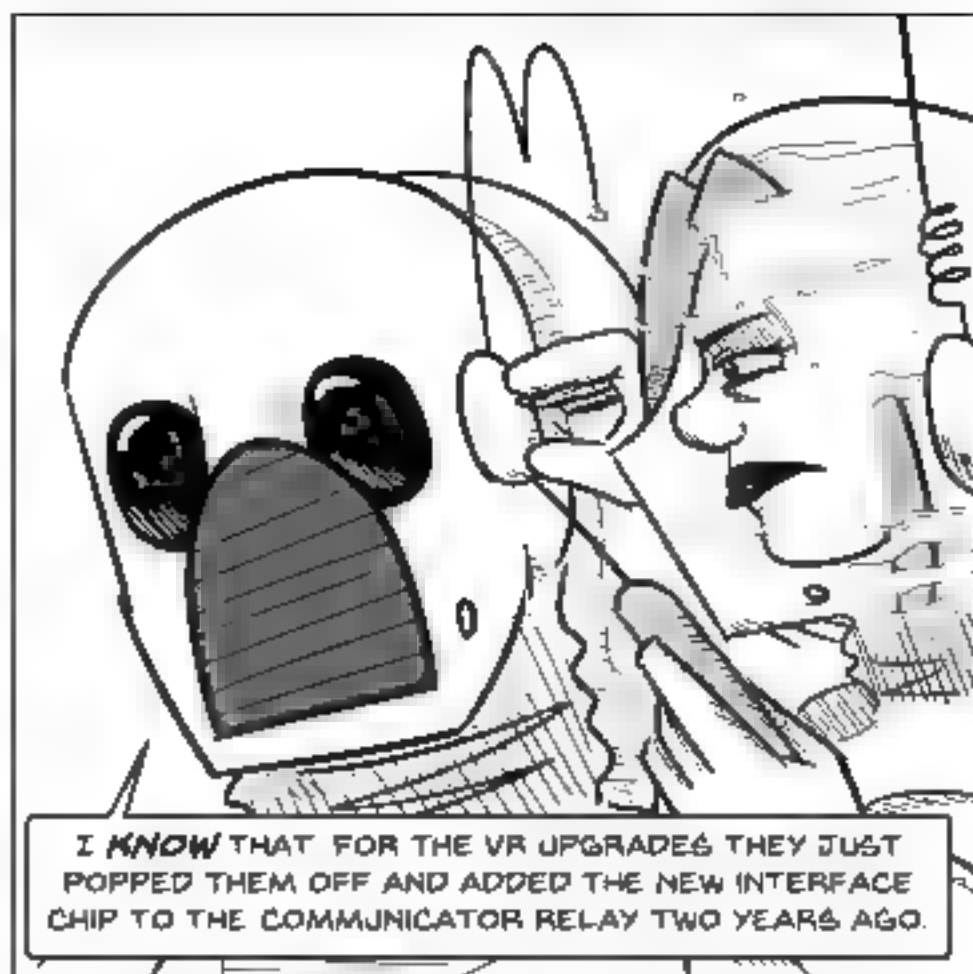
COULD YOU IMAGINE GETTING AMBUSHED BY
ONE OF THOSE THINGS WITHOUT A ZERO GUN
ON HAND TO HANDLE THEM?

I HAVE A GOOD IDEA WHAT THAT'S LIKE, YES.

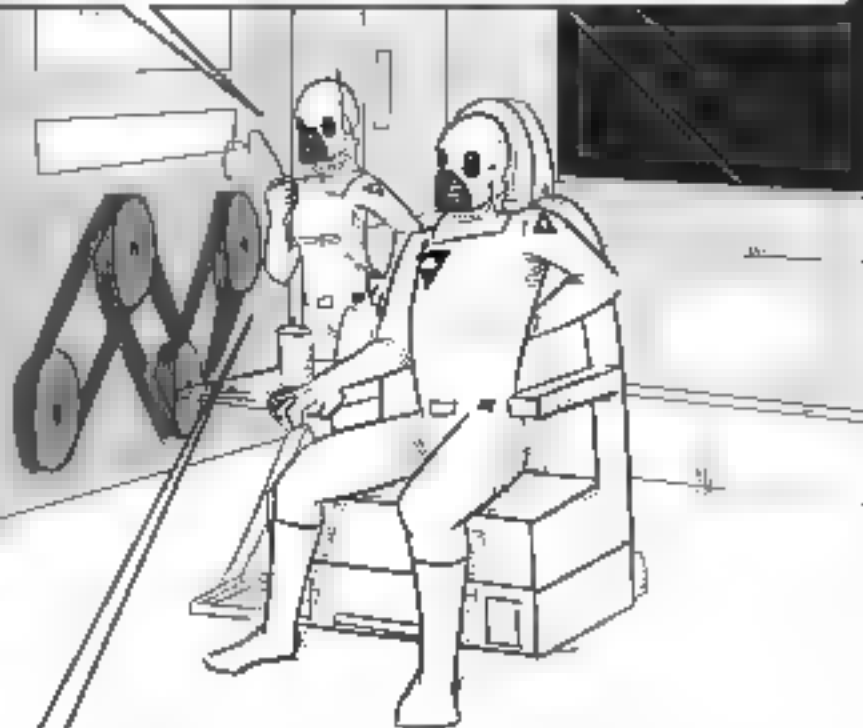


OH YES! THE SHARK MUTANT, I READ THE REPORT
YOUR PT SENT, YOU'RE VERY LUCKY
MR. CARDIGE! VERY VERY *VERY* LUCKY!



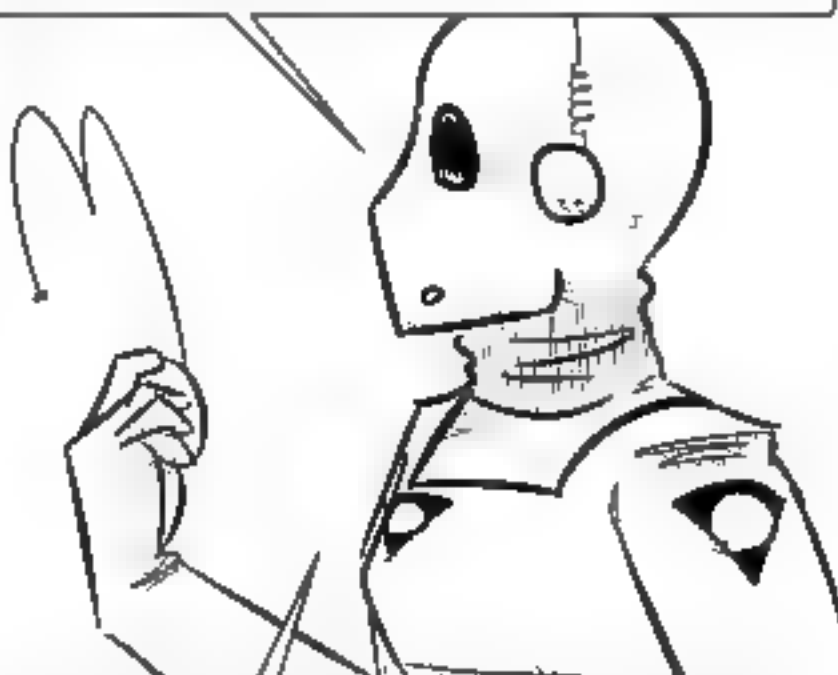


IT'S TRUE THAT FOR SOME WORKERS SIMPLY TAKING AWAY THEIR SIMULATED LIFE WILL MAKE THEM SNAP.



BUT NO, IN THIS INSTANCE THAT'S **NOT** THE CASE.

REALITY IS A **CRUEL** THING TO EXPERIENCE, SO MANY OPT TO PRETEND WE LIVE DIFFERENTLY TO COPE.

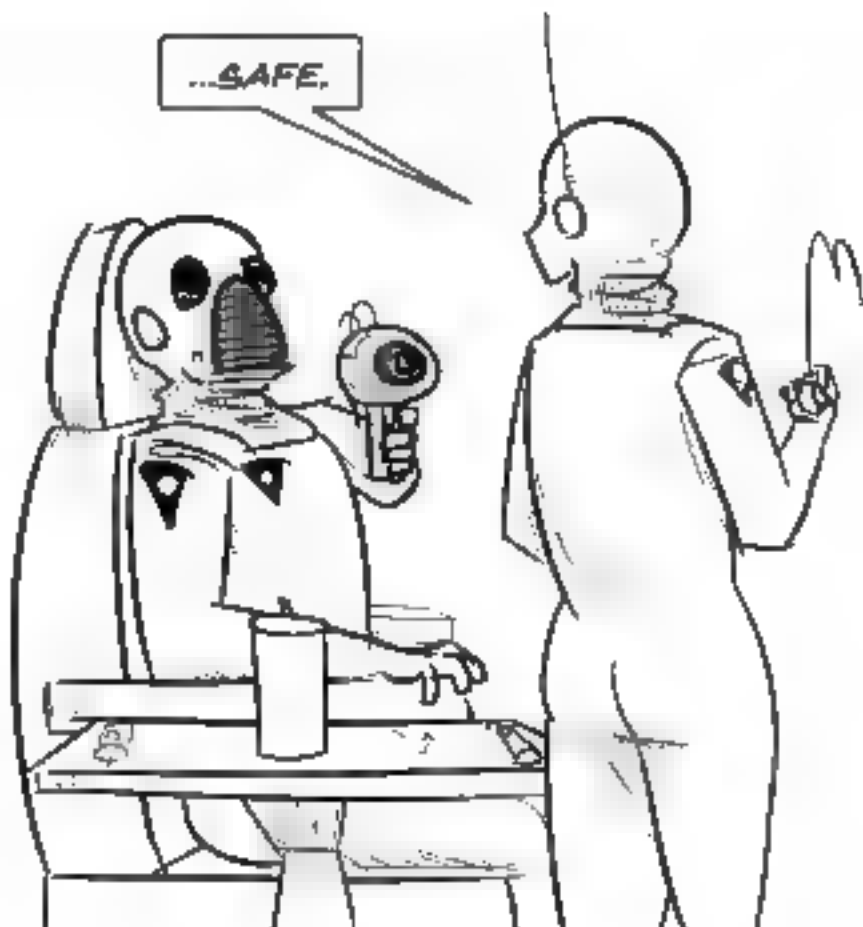


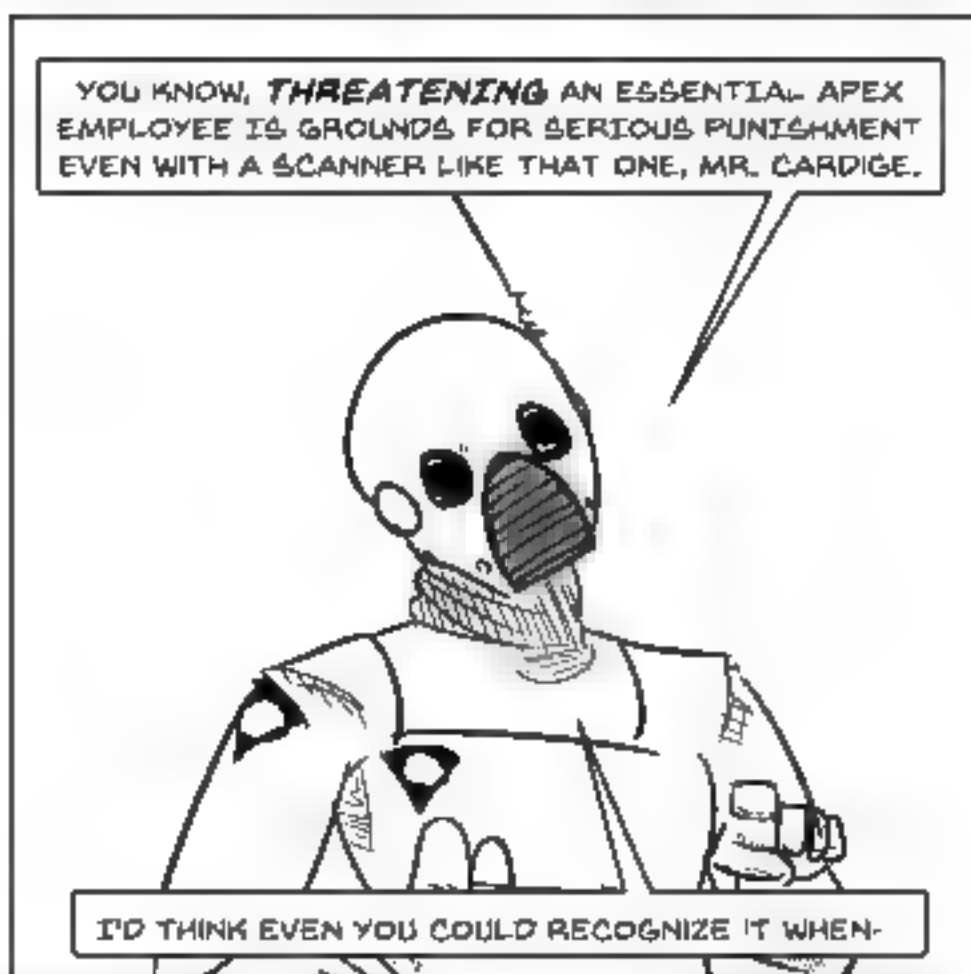
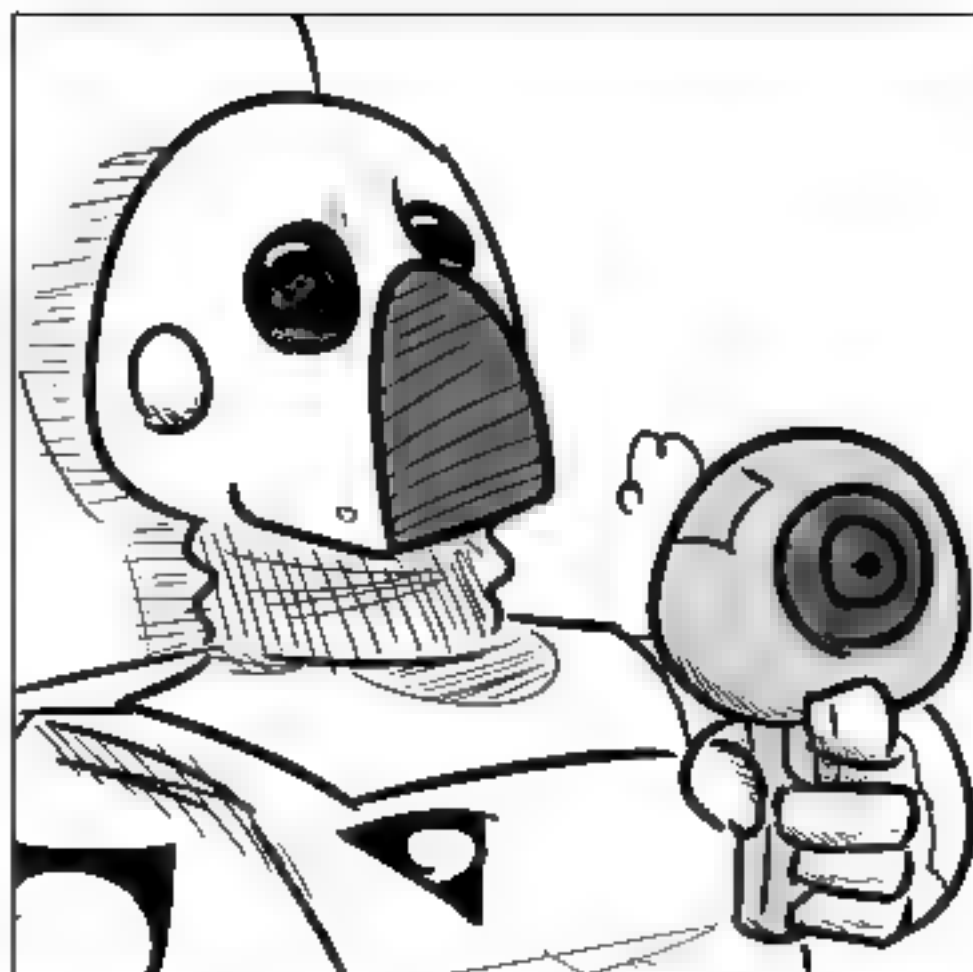
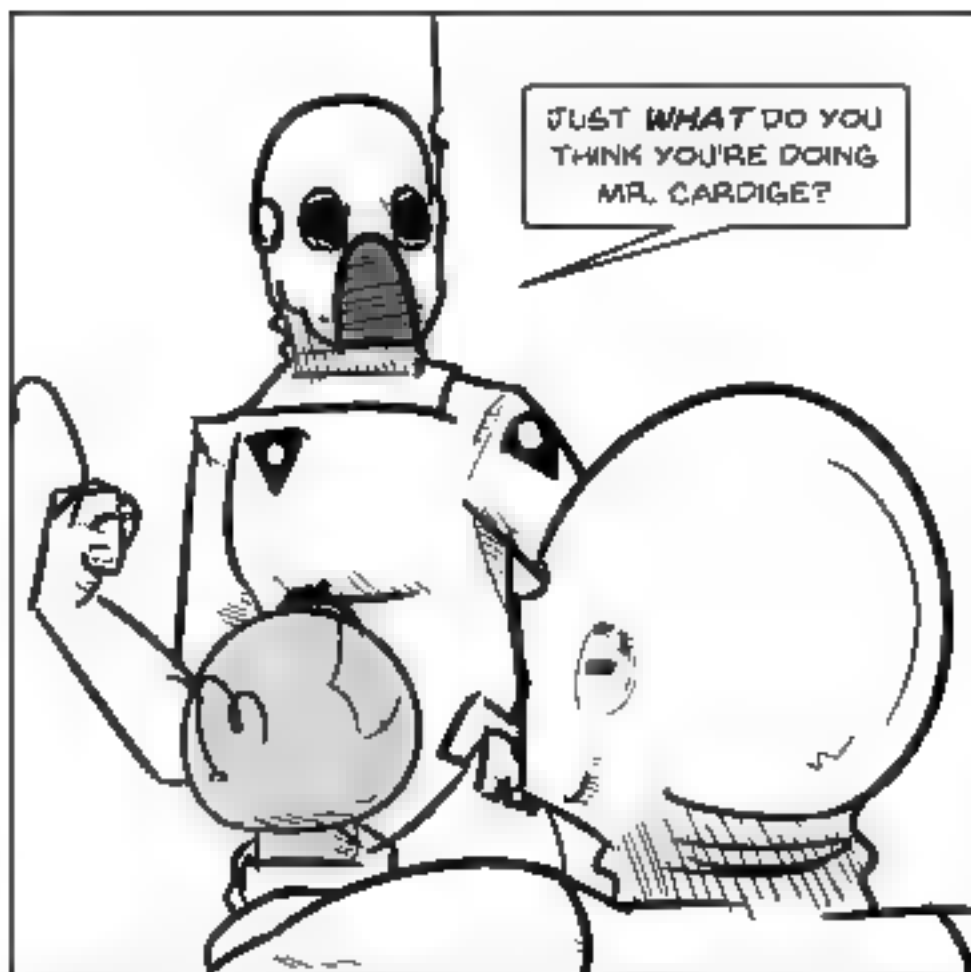
BUT FOR A FORMER EMPLOYEE, TO TARGET THE COMMUNICATOR THEY AIM TO DESTROY **EVERYTHING** THAT MAKES US FEEL SECURE

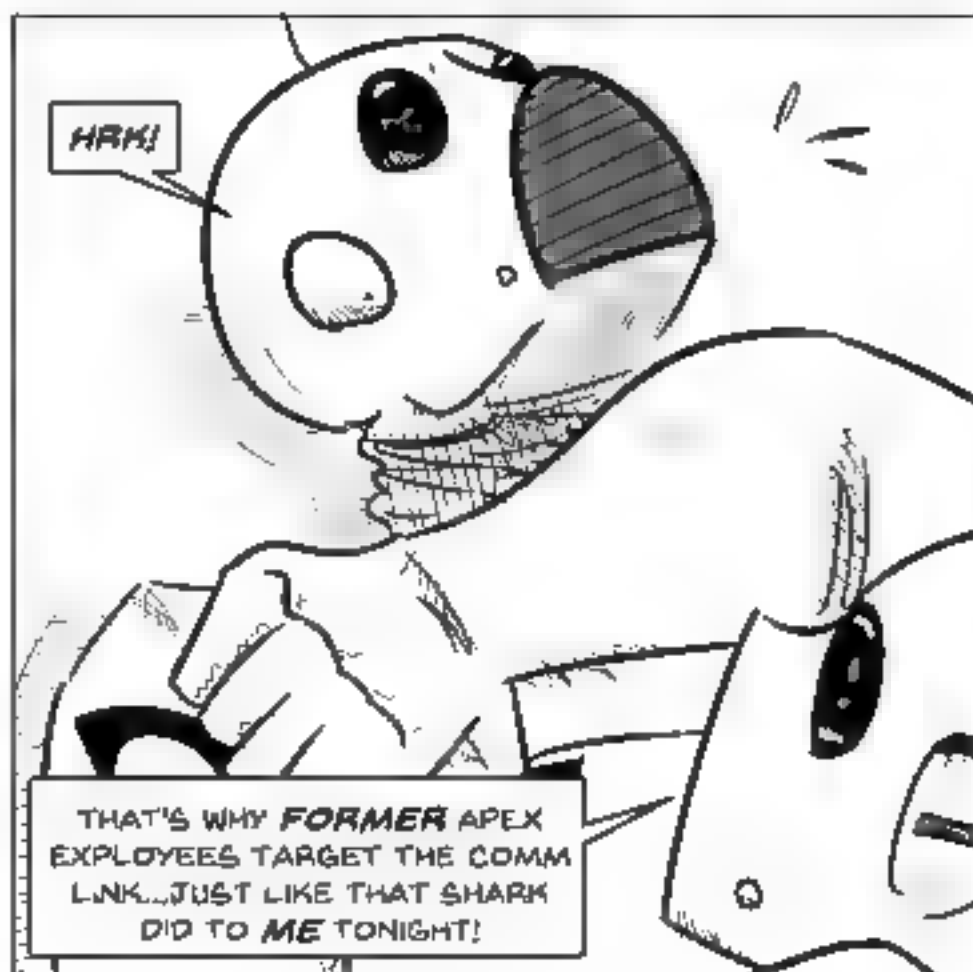
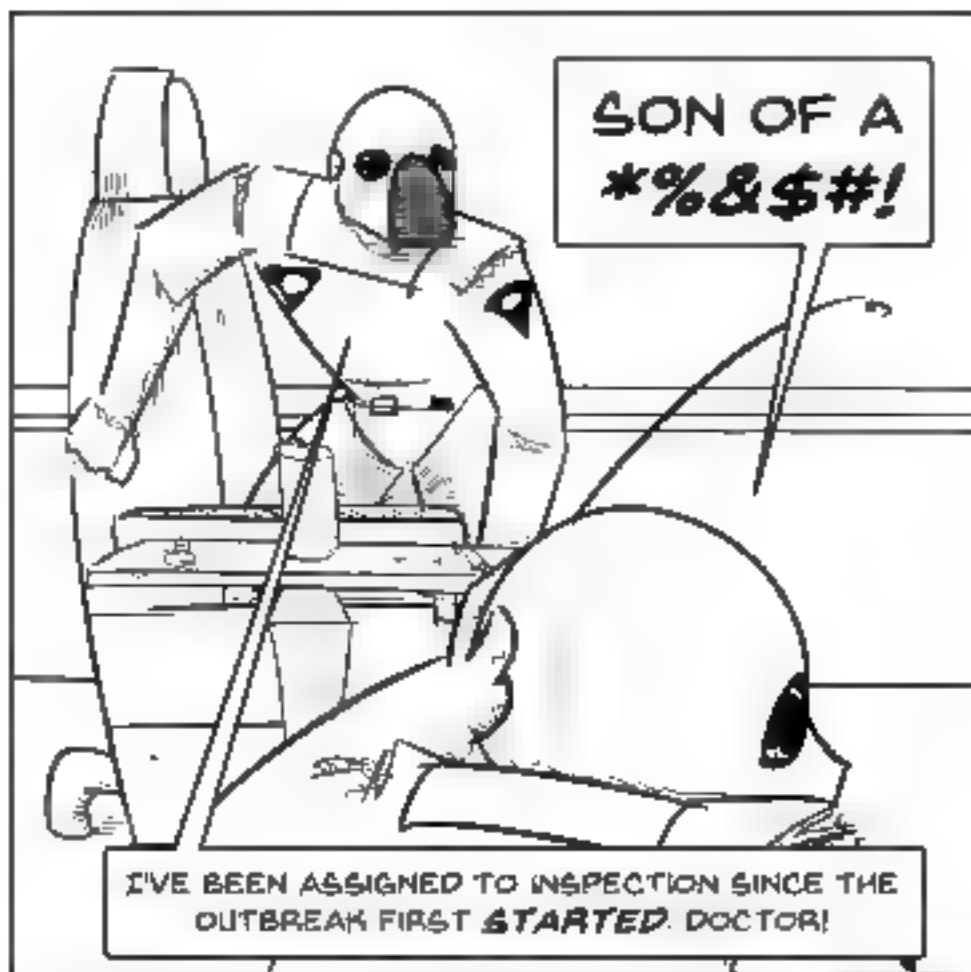
THEY SEEK TO EXPOSE US TO THE COLD REALITY THAT WE ARE **NOT** REALLY-



...SAFE.







YOU LIKE TO TALK PROTOCOL: IT'S **PROTOCOL**
TO TERMINATE AN INFECTED EMPLOYEE ONCE
THE INFECTION IS **DETECTED!**



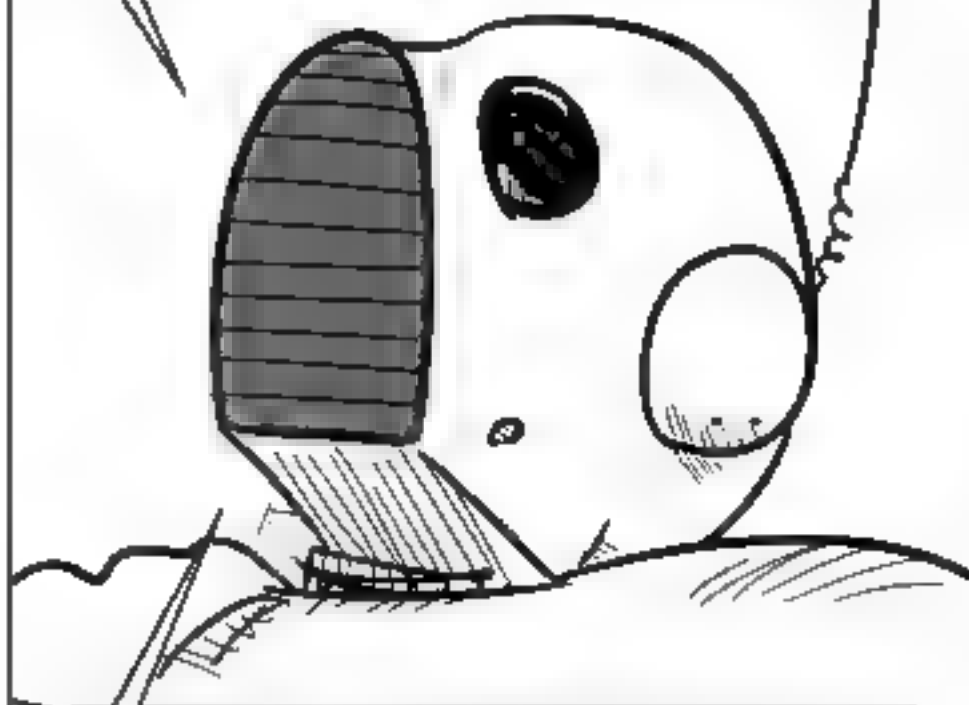
BUT MY PT DIDN'T SAY I WAS INFECTED, DOCTOR!

YOU **SAID** YOU GOT A REPORT FROM MY PT.
DID YOU TELL HER TO **LIE** TO ME?! TO MY PARTNER?!



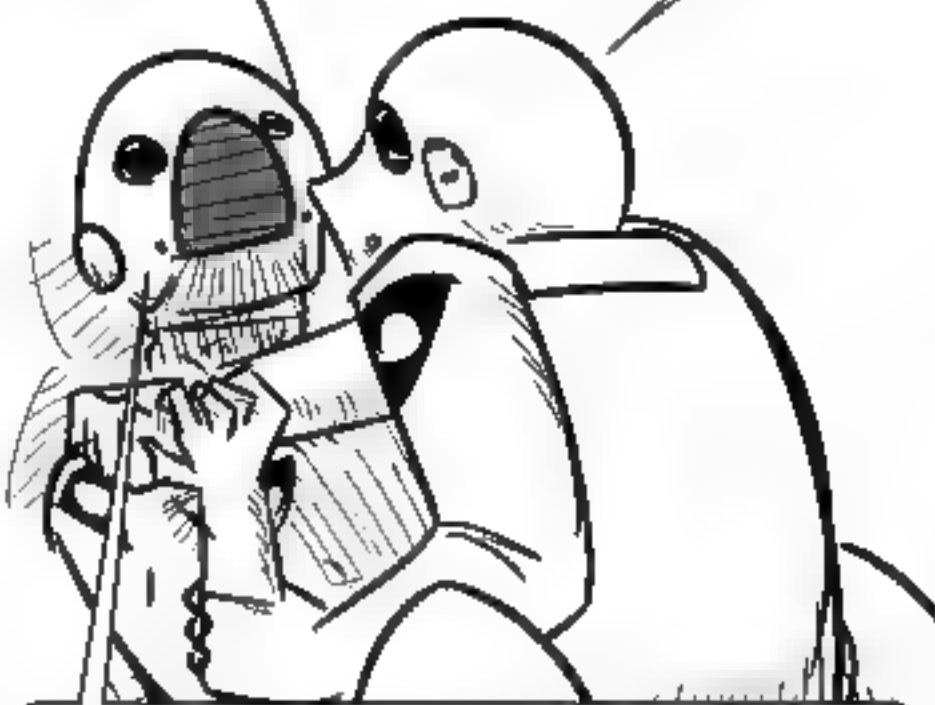
ANSWER ME!

DID. IT'S SO **RARE** TO HAVE SOMEONE...LIKE YOU
WHO DIDN'T MUTATE...A **TYPHOID MARY**...

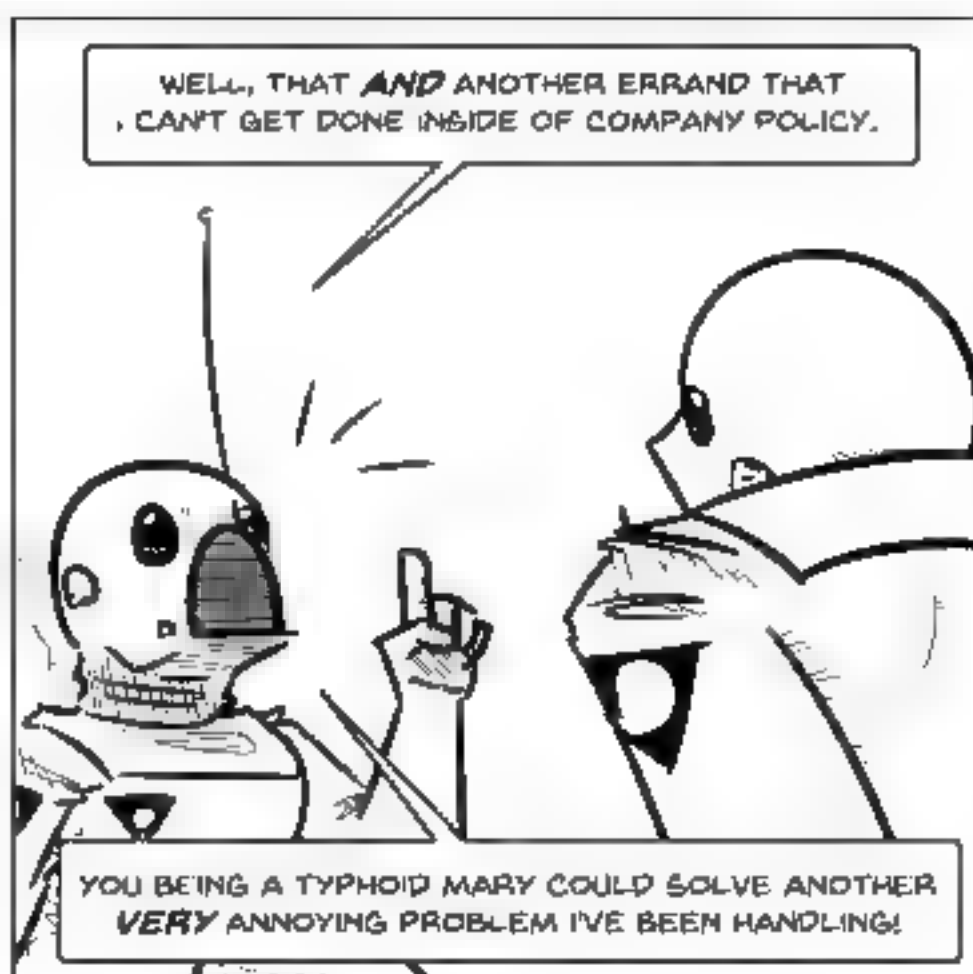
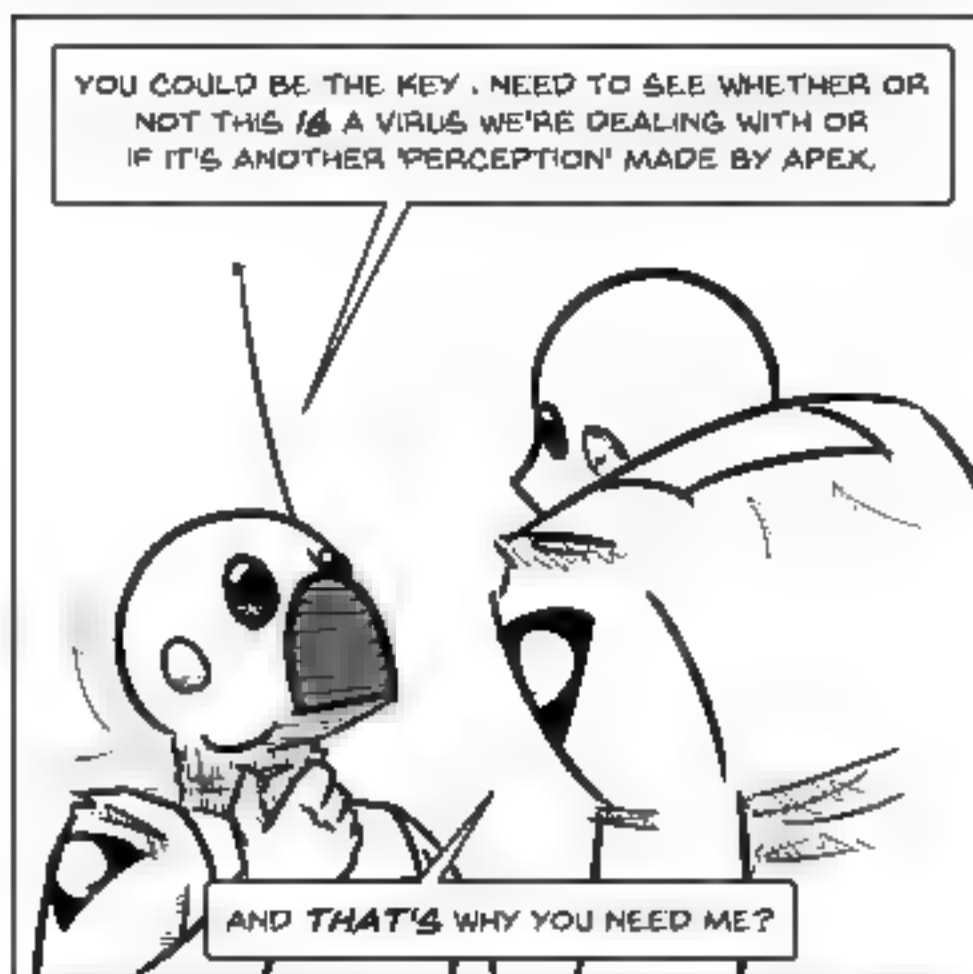


I OVERRODE...THE **PROGRAMMING** ONCE THE
ALARM WENT OFF...SO **LUCKY** I WAS ON DUTY...

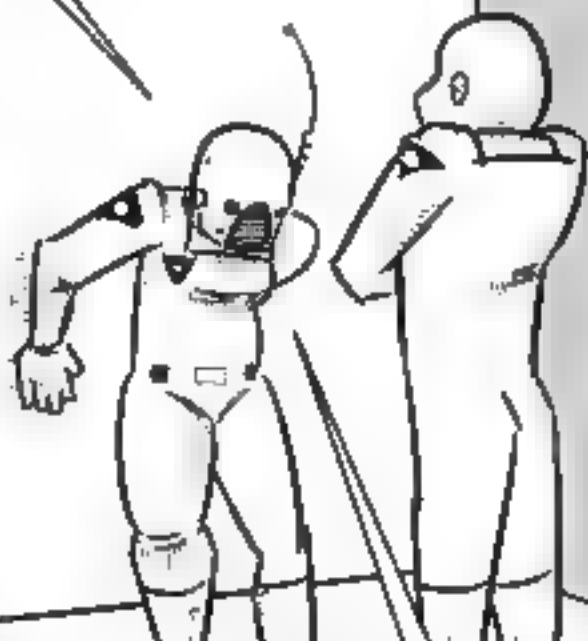
LUCKY?! YOU LURED ME DOWN HERE TO **TORTURE**



N-NO! I HAVE A **THEORY**...A THEORY ABOUT THE
MUTATIONS...AND I **NEED** A TYPHOID MARY!

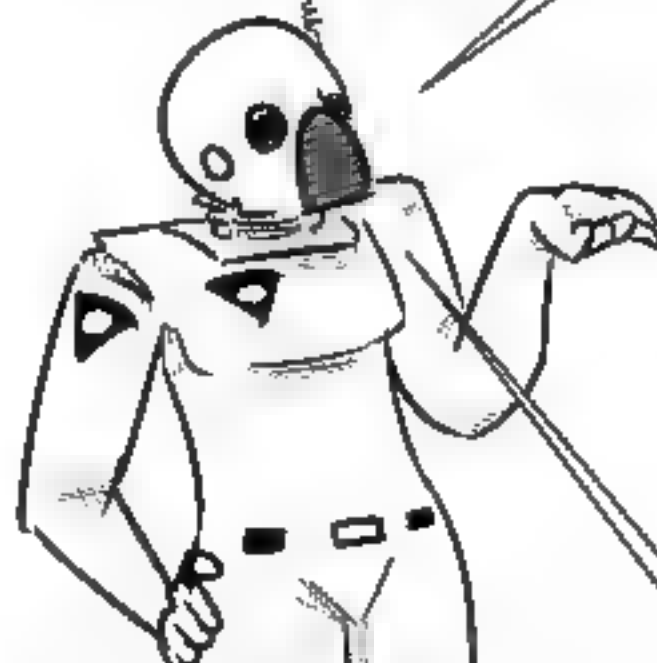


COMPANY POLICY CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ERADICATION
OF EVERY KNOWN MUTANT AND COLONY SITE.



BUT HERE WE ARE **YEARS** DOWN THE LINE AND STILL
THERE ARE MUTANTS WANDERING THE WASTES!

CONSIDER IT MR. CARDIGE. YOU'RE INSPECTION
SO YOU HAVE MORE EXPERIENCE IN THIS FIELD.



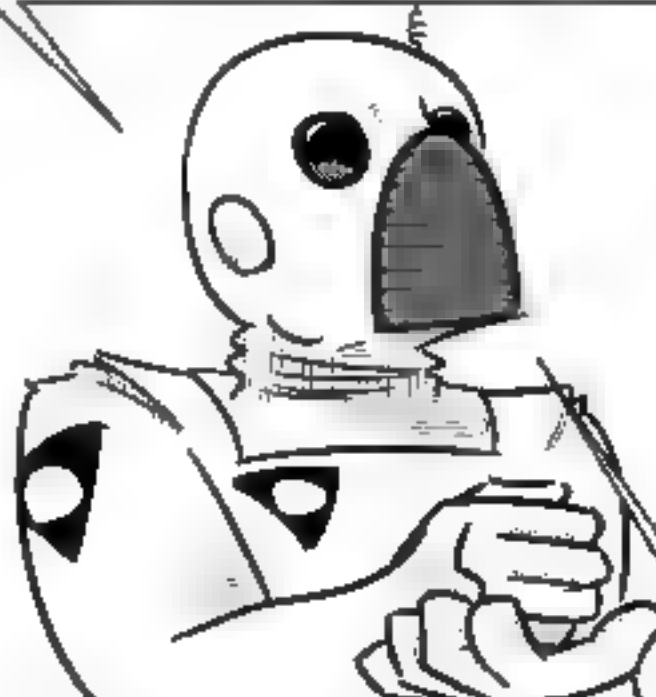
HOW ARE THE MUTANTS SURVIVING DESPITE THE LACK
OF RESOURCES AND OUR PURGING CAMPAIGN?

CAN'T YOU FIND THAT OUT **YOURSELF**, DOCTOR?

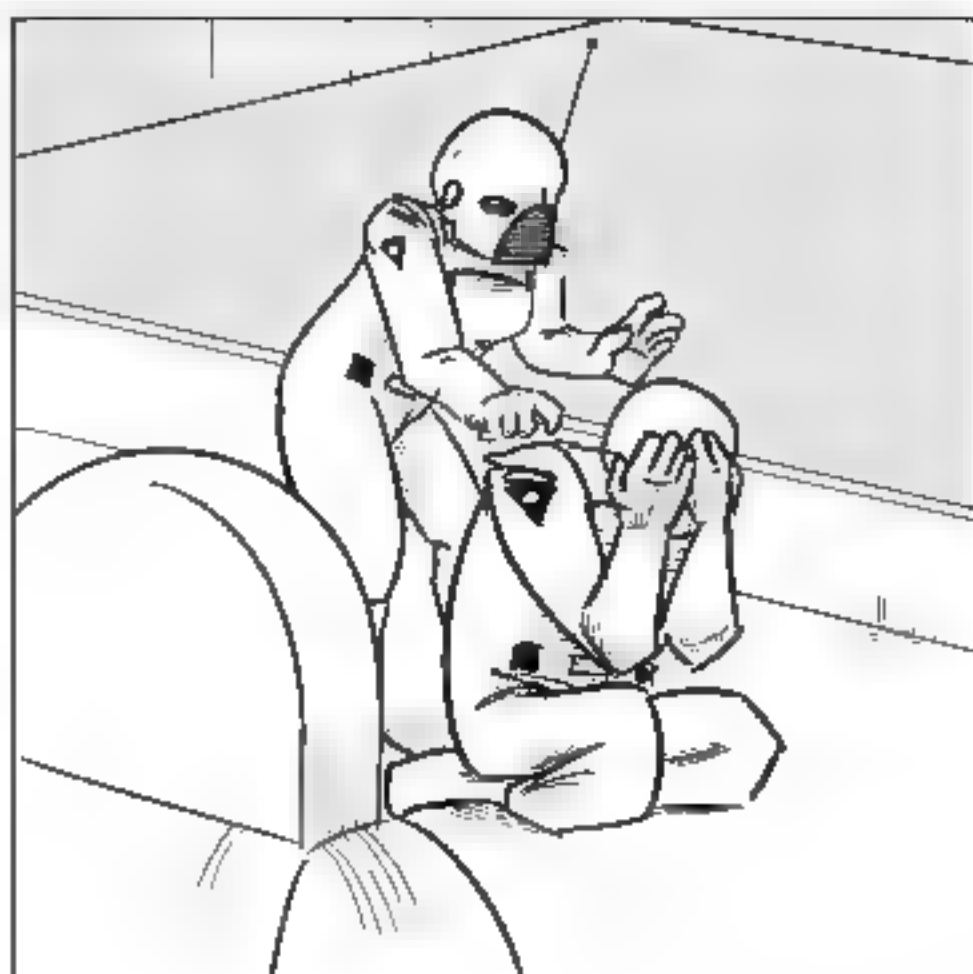
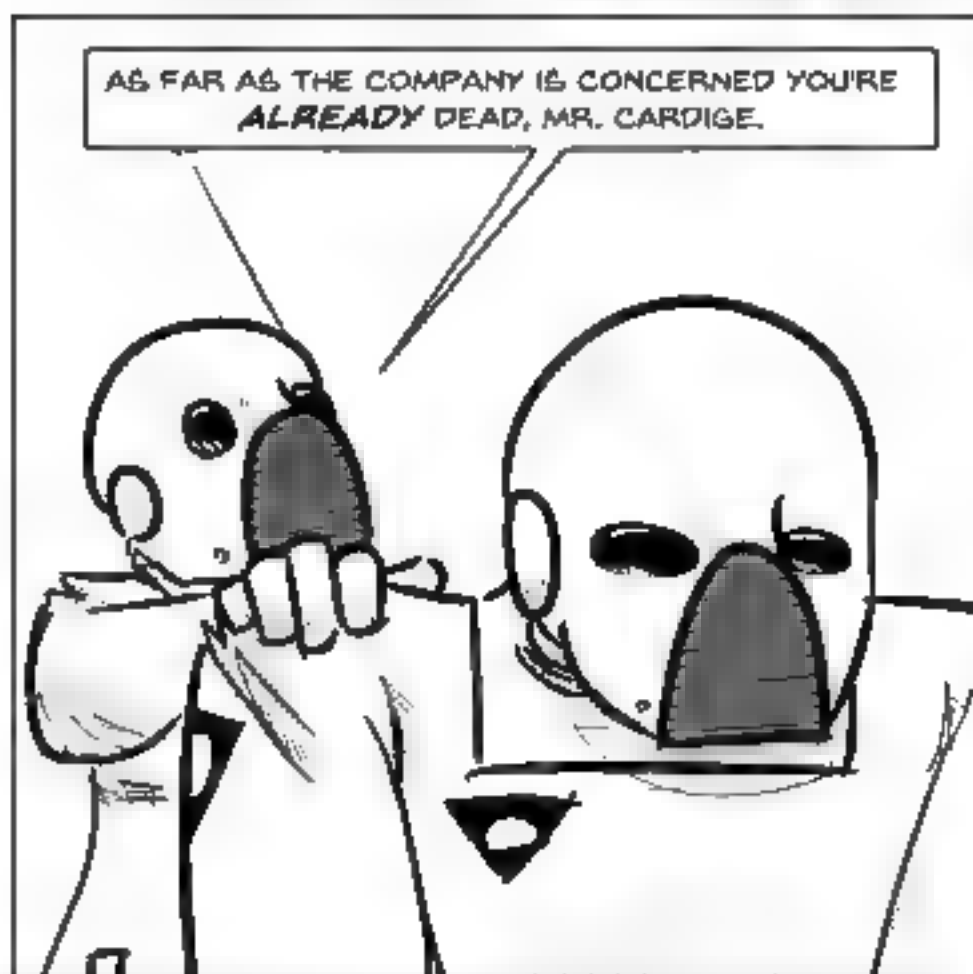
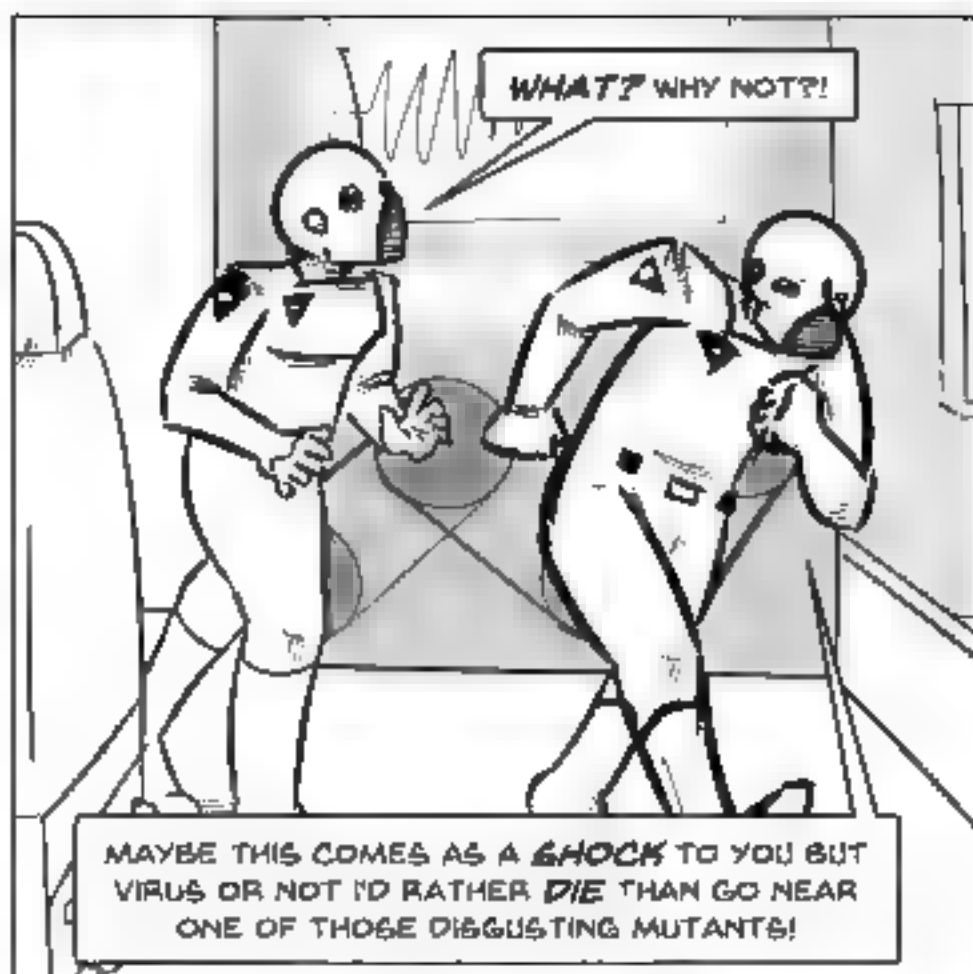
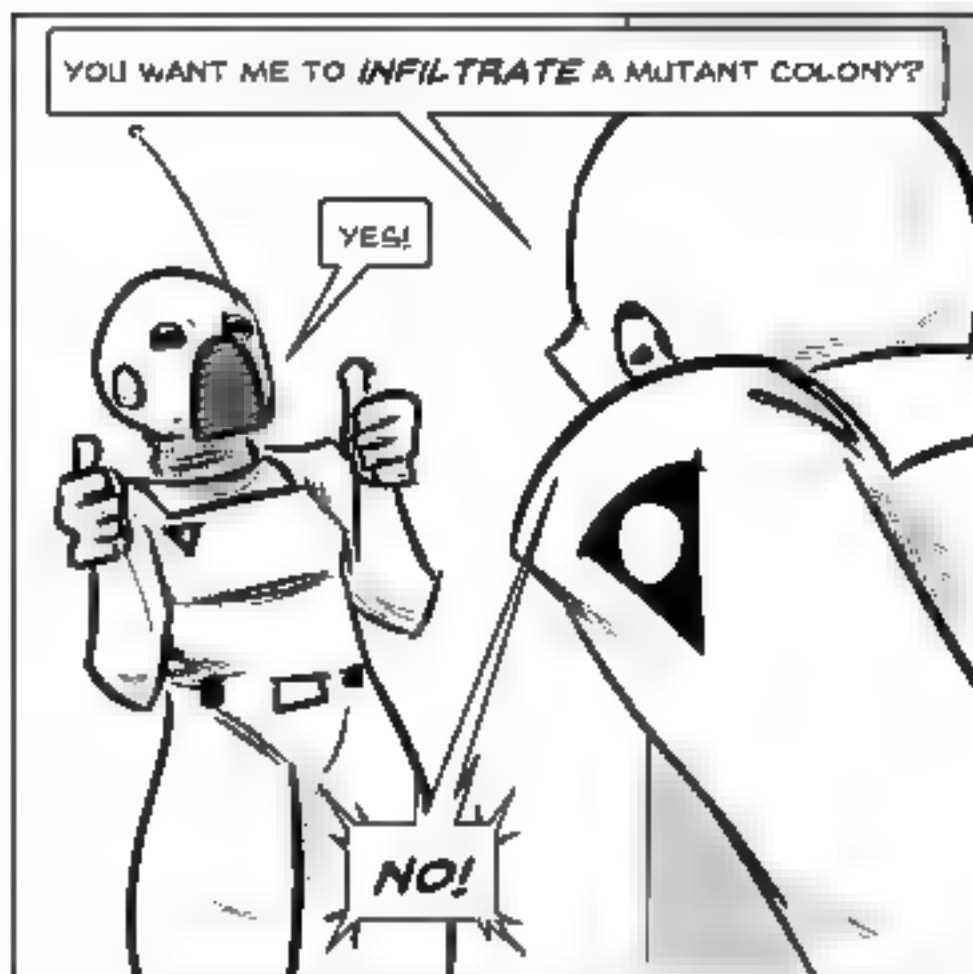


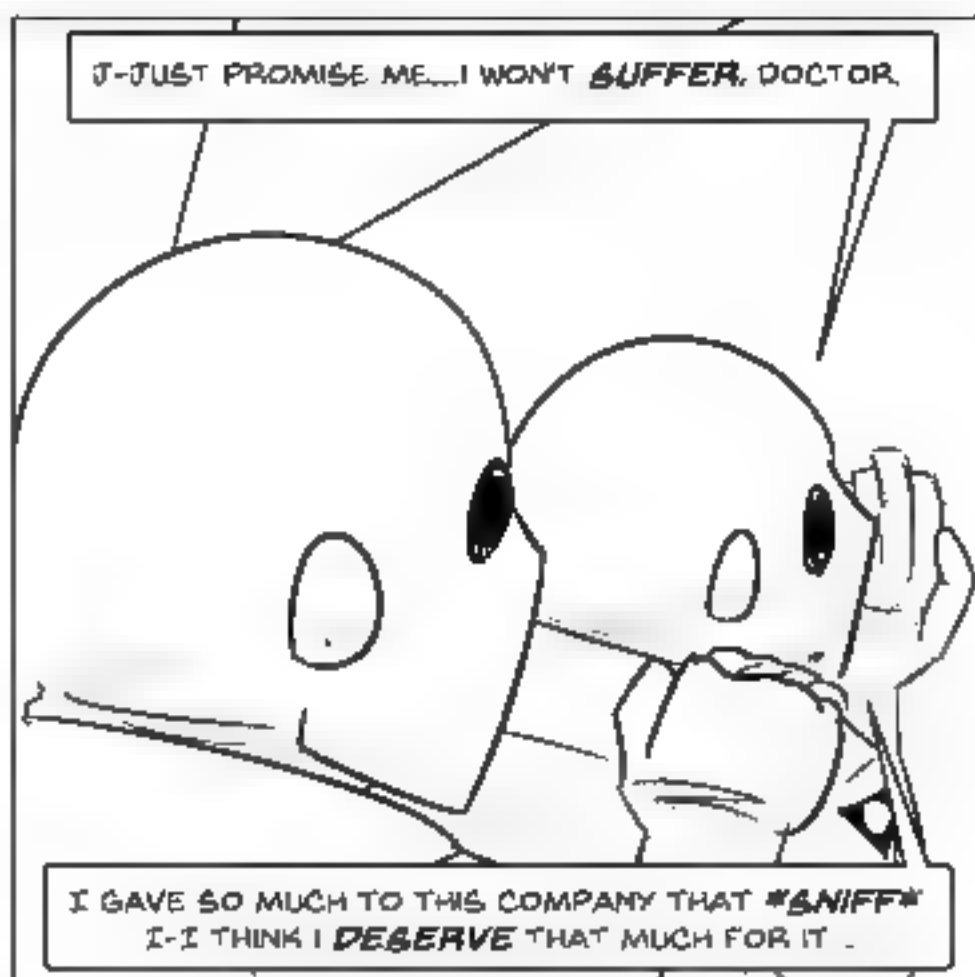
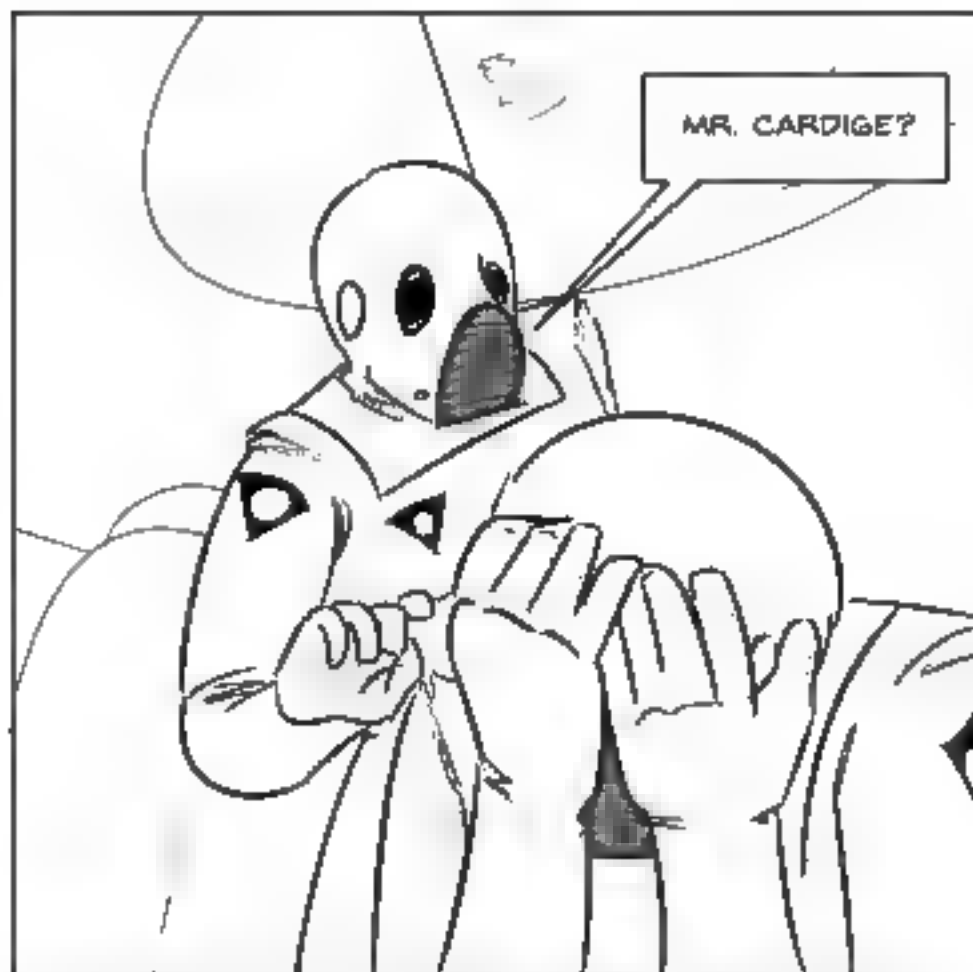
I **WISH** I COULD BUT THE SHOOT FIRST ASK
QUESTIONS NEVER POLICY IS **KILLING** ME.

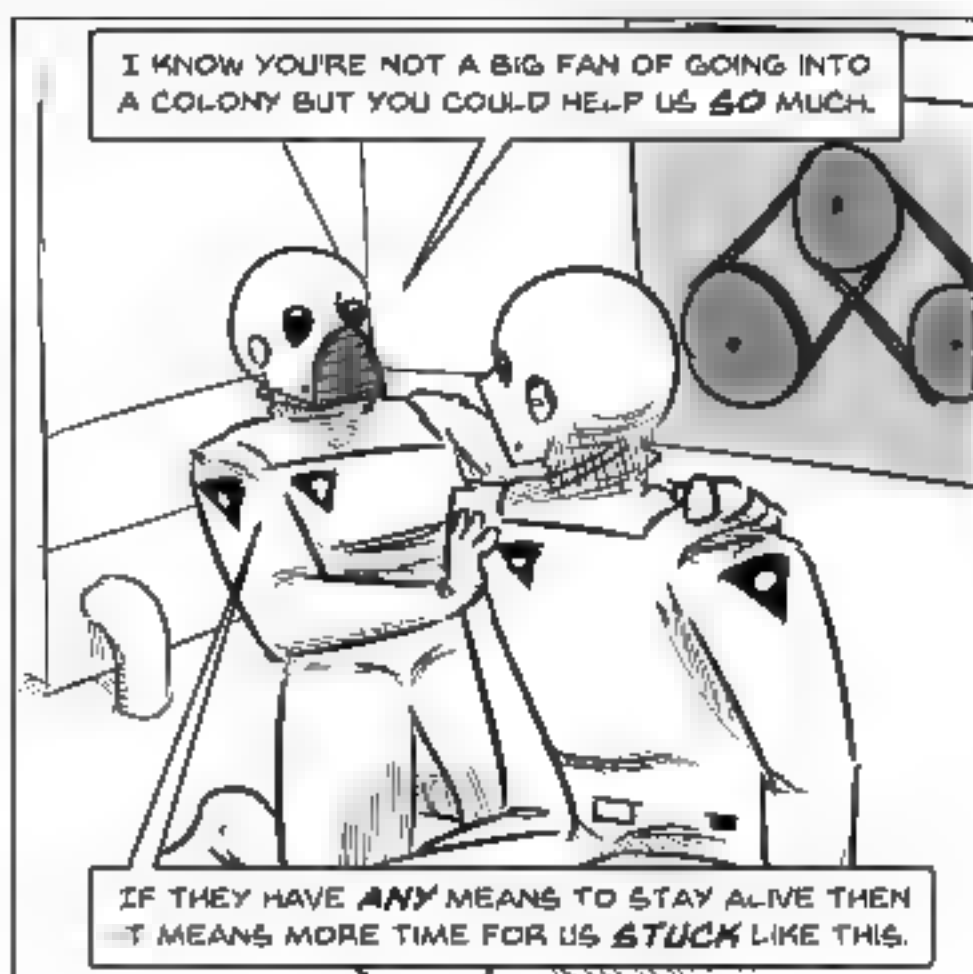
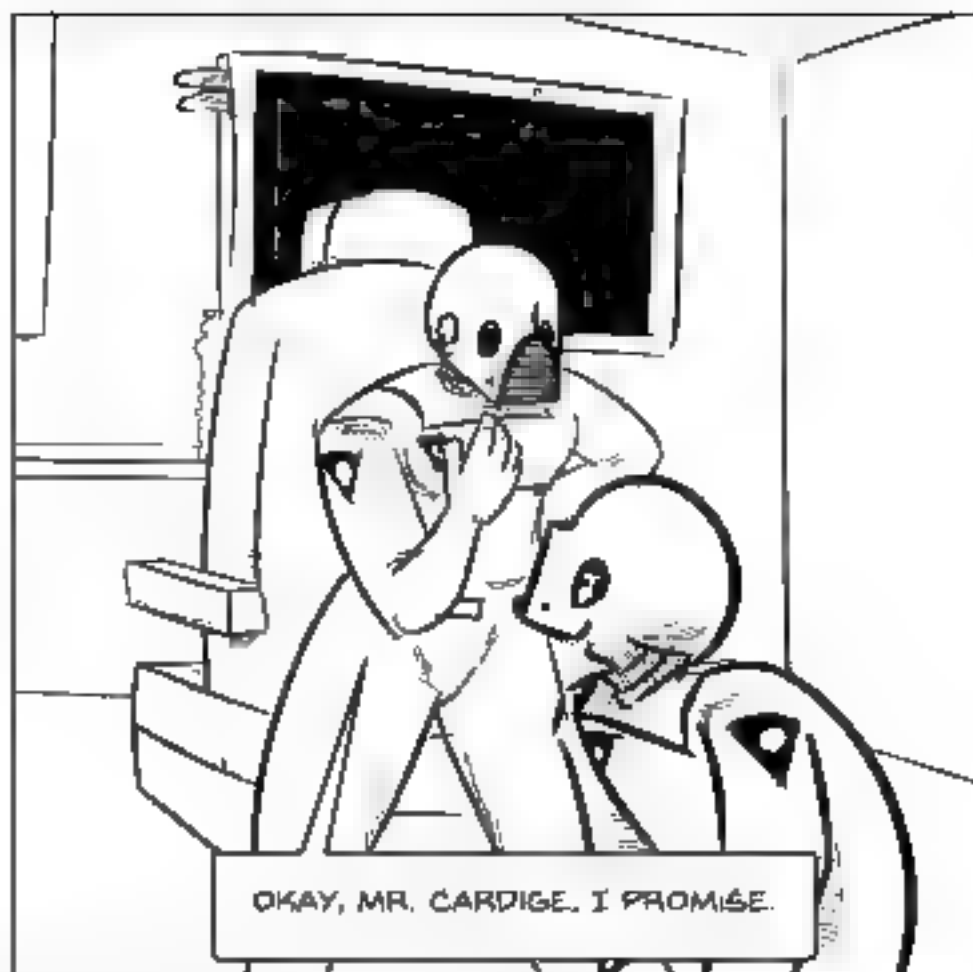
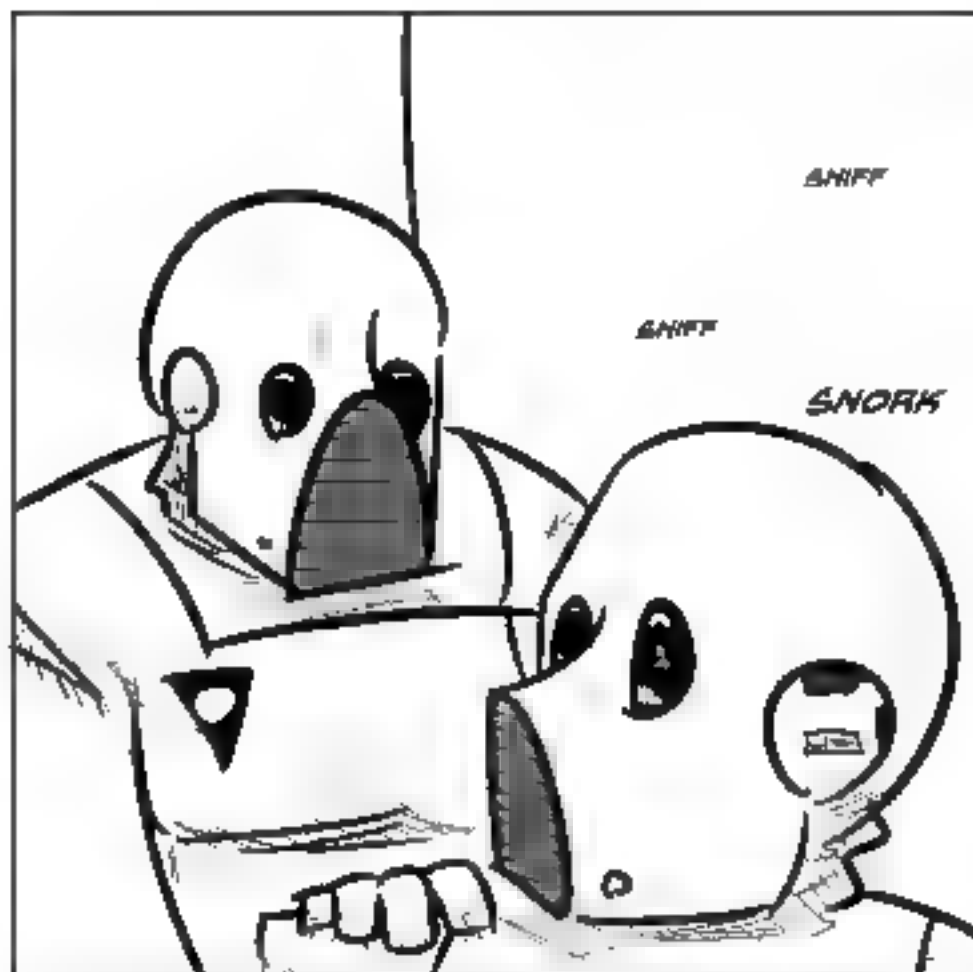
I **FINALLY** GOT ONE BREAK, A LOCATION OF ONE
OF THESE REMNANT COLONIES, BUT I NEED **MORE**.



NEED AN INSIDE GUY TO GET **ALL** THE
INFORMATION, I NEED TO MAKE A SOLID REPORT.





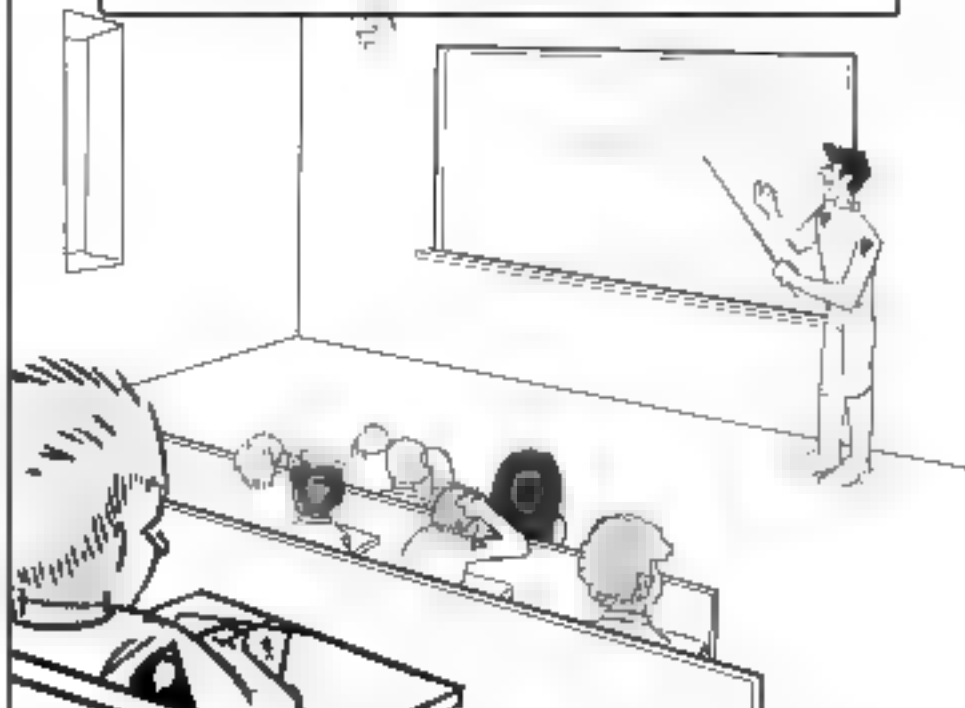


DAY IN AND OUT WE LIVE SEALED IN THESE SUITS.



EVERYTHING WE KNOW IS SO *TENUOUS*. IT EXISTS BECAUSE OF MATERIAL NOT EVEN AN INCH THICK.

WE ARE THE *LAST* REMNANTS OF HUMANITY LEFT THAT CAN REBUILD ONE DAY.



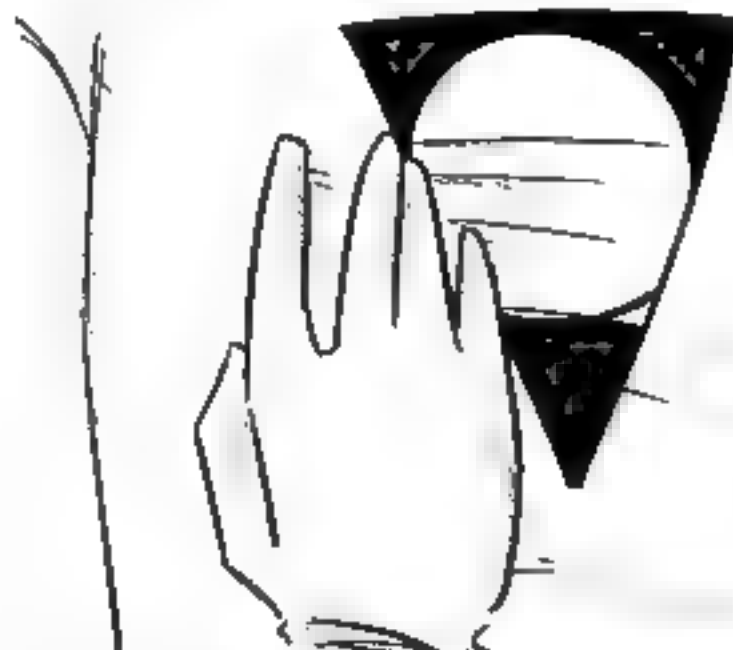
AND ONE DAY EVERY MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD WILL BE ABLE TO *REMOVE* THESE FOR GOOD.

THEY'LL BE ABLE TO SMELL THE AIR AGAIN.



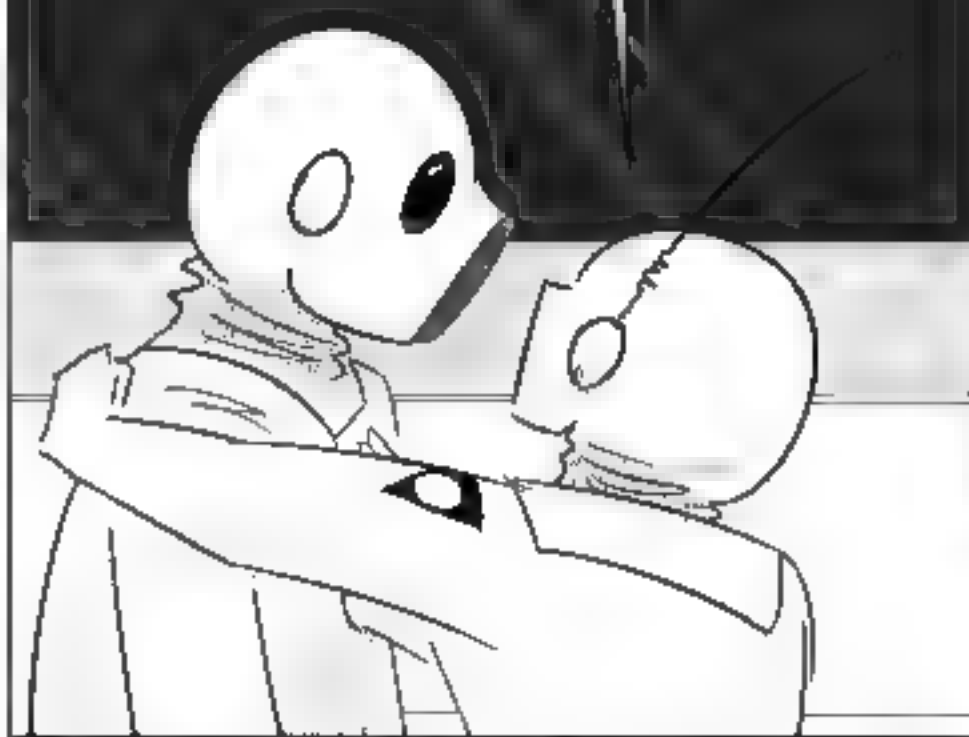
FEEL A BREEZE CARESS THEIR FACE..

KNOW THE WARM TOUCH OF ANOTHER AGAIN...



YOU COULD MAKE THAT HAPPEN. *YOU* COULD HELP BRING THAT FUTURE TO SO MANY PEOPLE.

IT'S JUST ALL UP TO YOU, CLOVIS.



IF YOU TOLERATE THOSE MUTANTS LONG ENOUGH
TO GET THE **SECRETS** OF THEIR SURVIVAL...

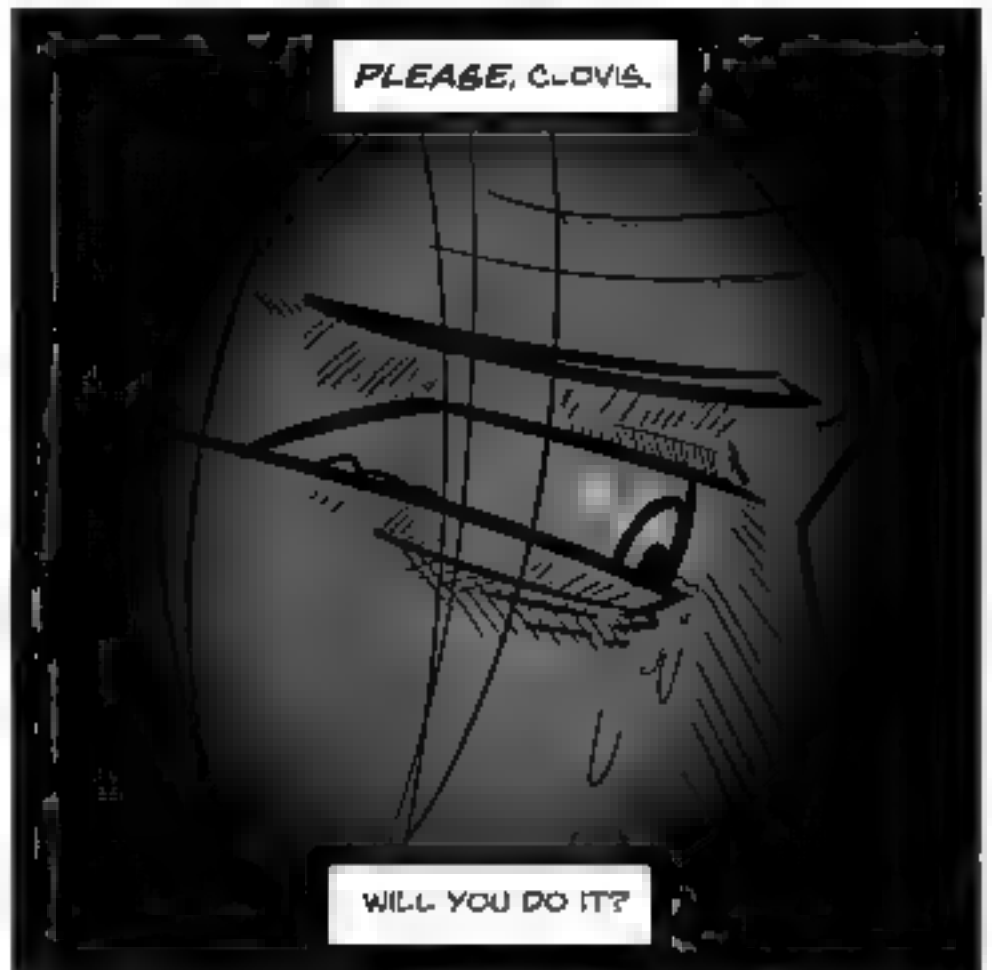


THEN YOU'LL BE THE MAN WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE...

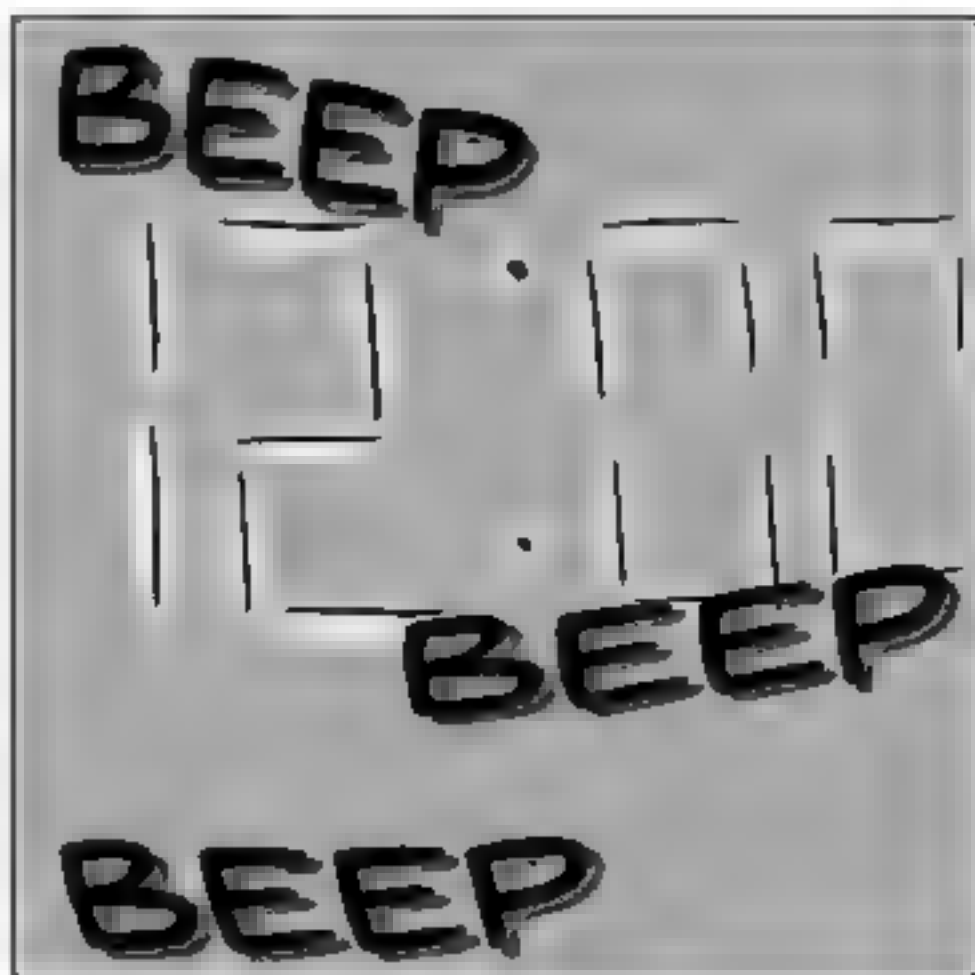
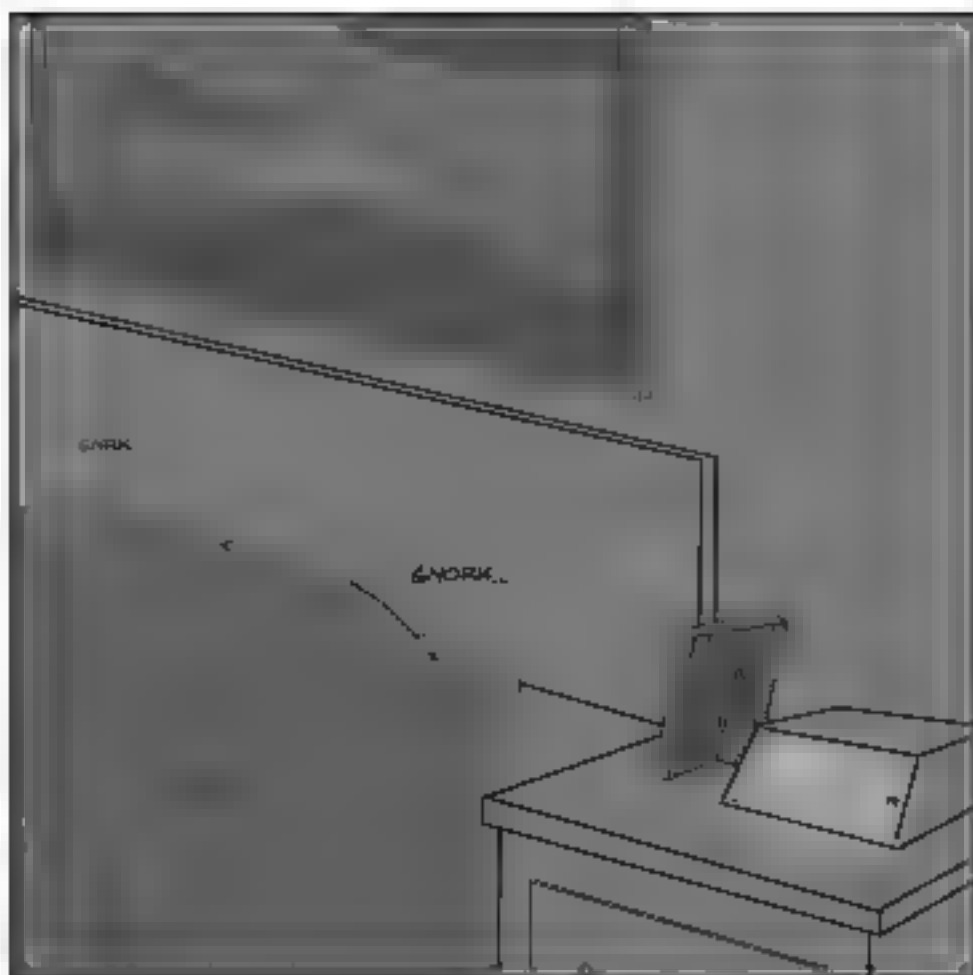
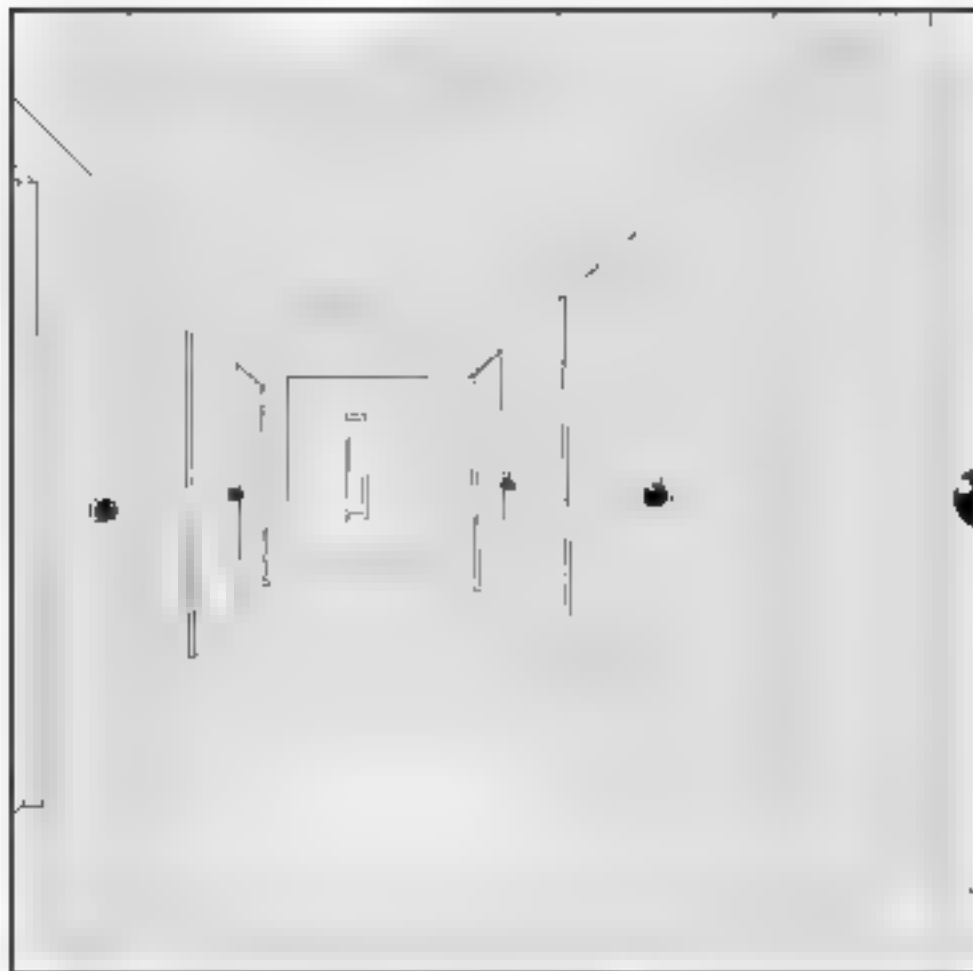


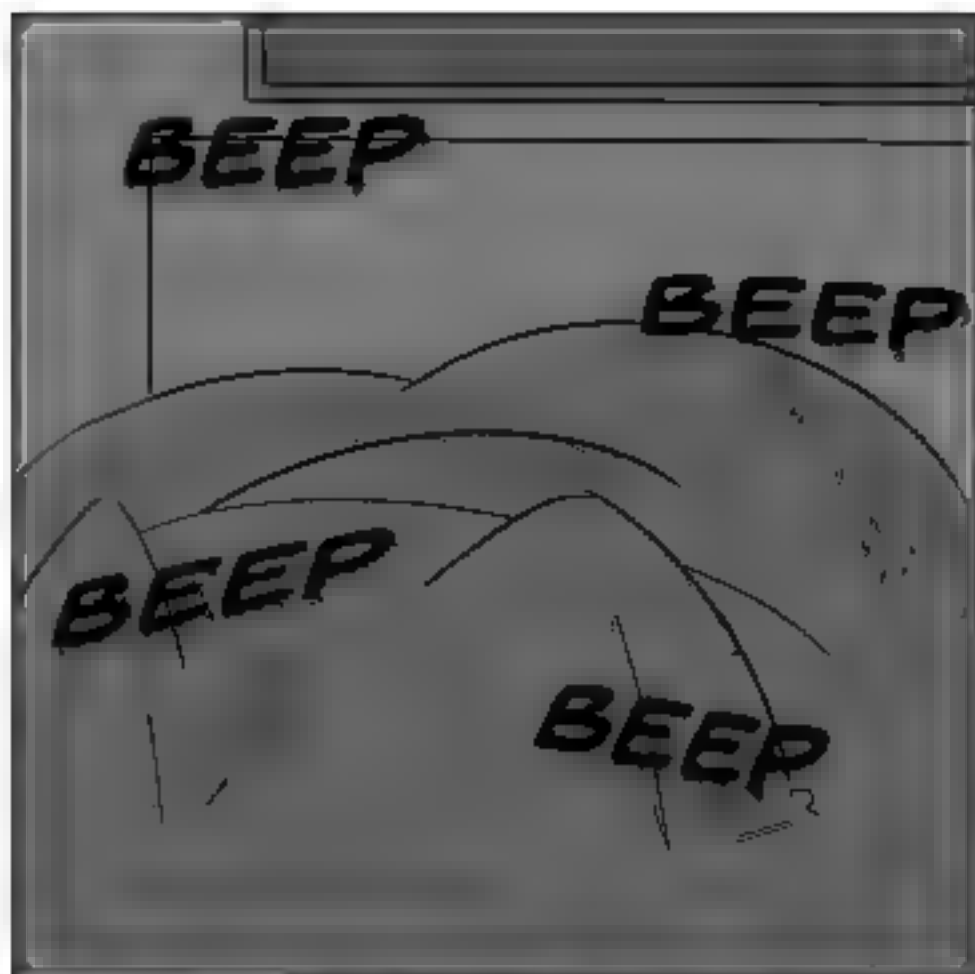
FOR US TO LIVE AGAIN.

PLEASE, CLOVIS.

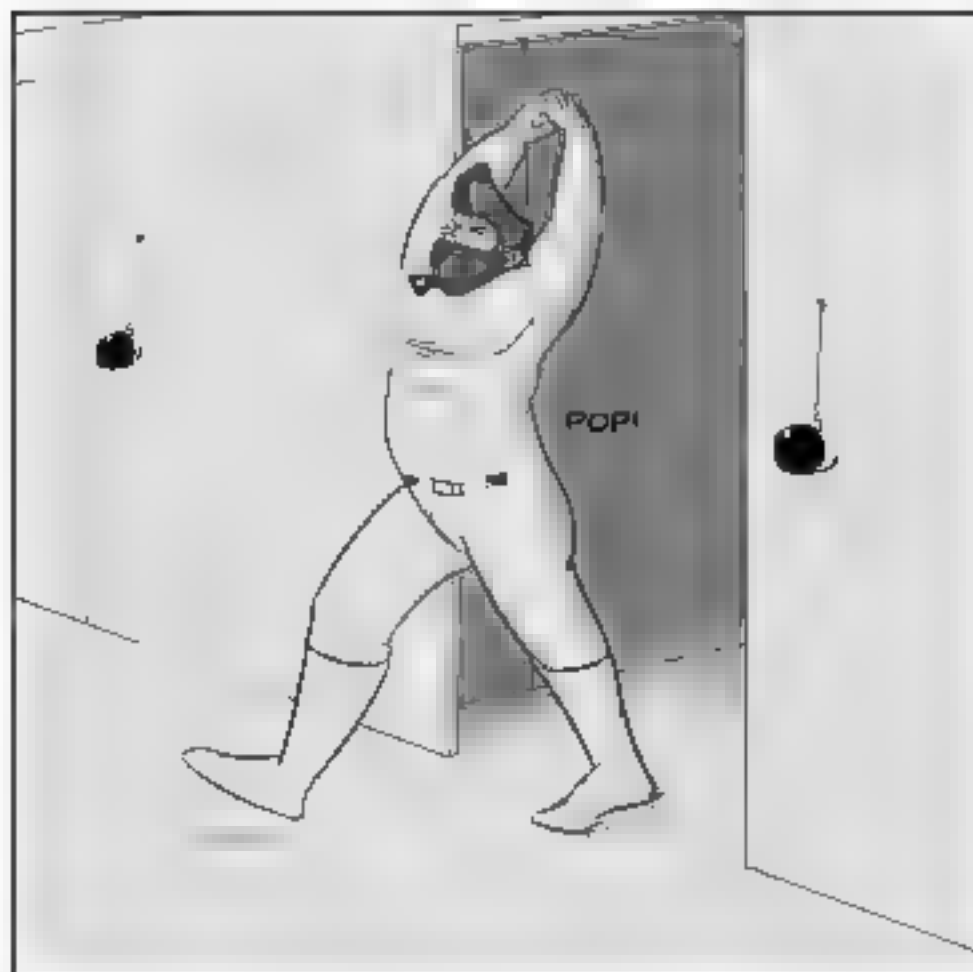


WILL YOU DO IT?









MR. CARDIGE IS NOT IN AT THE MOMENT, MR. BUNSEN.

HMM?

DID HE LEAVE
ALREADY?

NOT **ENTIRELY**, SIR...



HE HASN'T BEEN IN SINCE HE LEFT WITH YOU
YESTERDAY, MR. BUNSEN.

THANK YOU FOR STOPPING BY.

YEAH, YEAH..

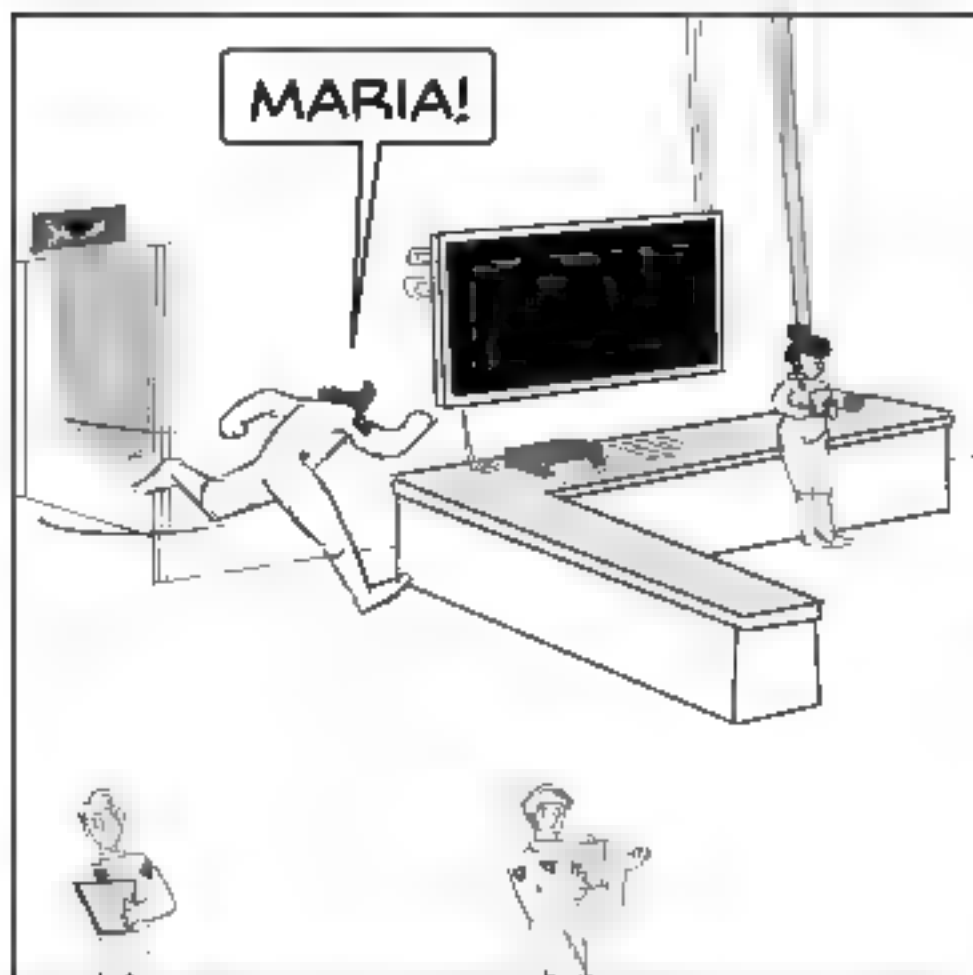
HMRN...

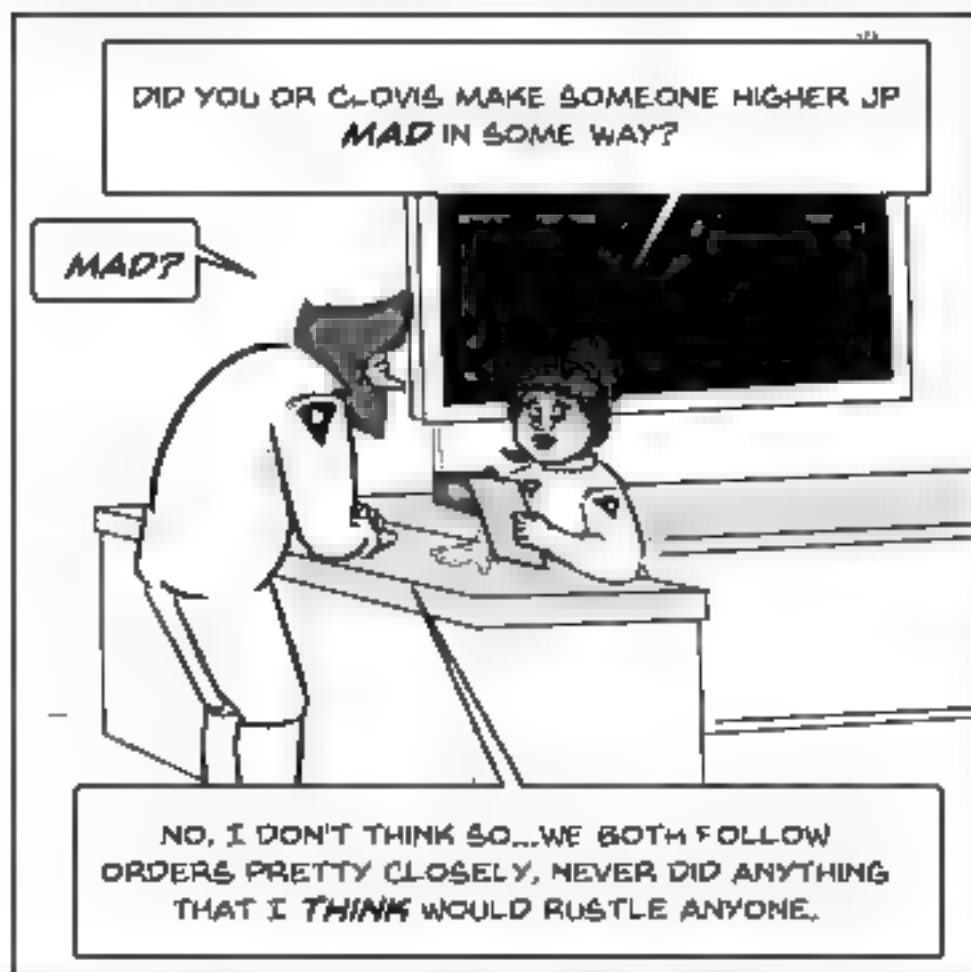
SINCE *YESTERDAY*, HUM...?

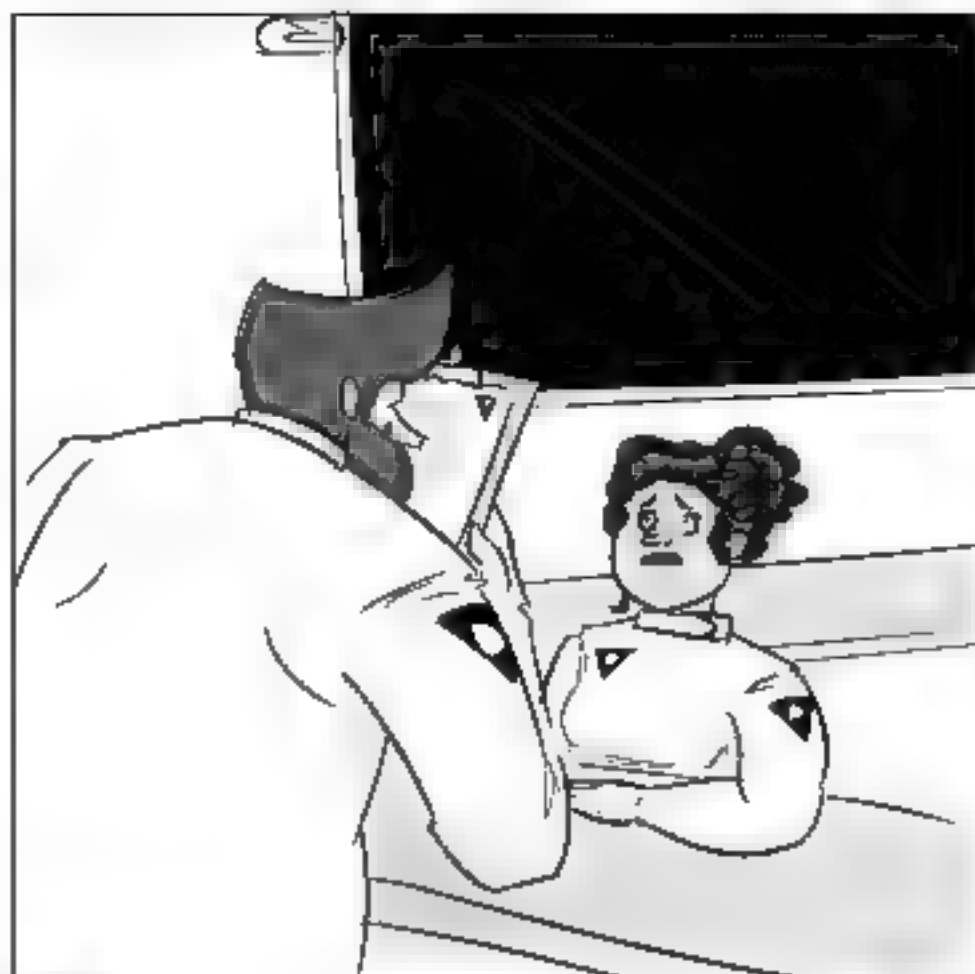
THE INSTA-TRAVEL TRAM WILL BE ARRIVING SHORTLY!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENCE AND COOPERATION!









HE KEPT **WORRYIN'** ABOUT GOING DOWN THERE,
SAYING ALL THIS WEIRD STUFF...



I JUST THOUGHT MAYBE HE WAS BEING PARANOID..
THAT HE'D BE **FINE**, YOU KNOW?

HE WENT DOWN THERE AND NEVER CAME BACK UP
FROM HIS SUIT REPAIR LAST NIGHT.



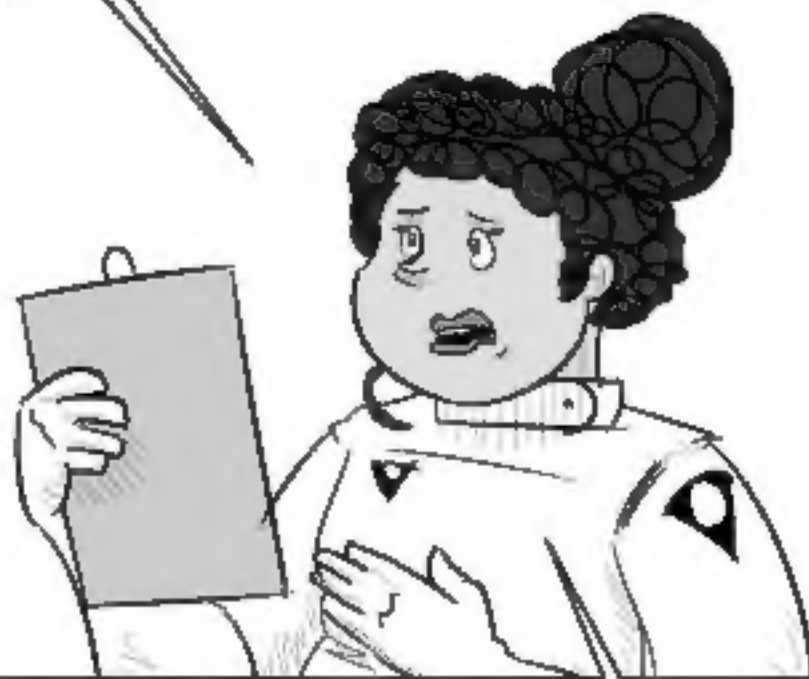
WHAT IF SOMETHING HORRIBLE **DID** HAPPEN?

BERNARD, YOU AND I SAW HIM YESTERDAY AND
ASIDE A BENT UP ANTENNA HE WAS **FINE**, RIGHT?

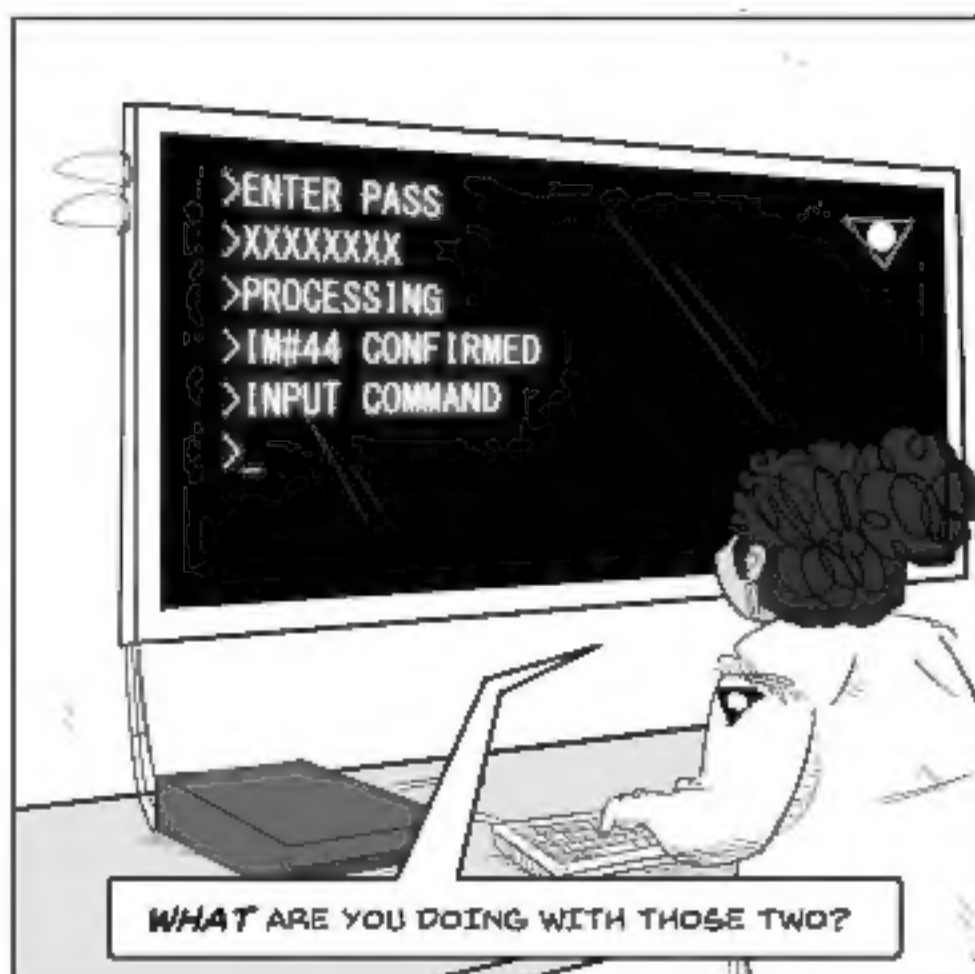


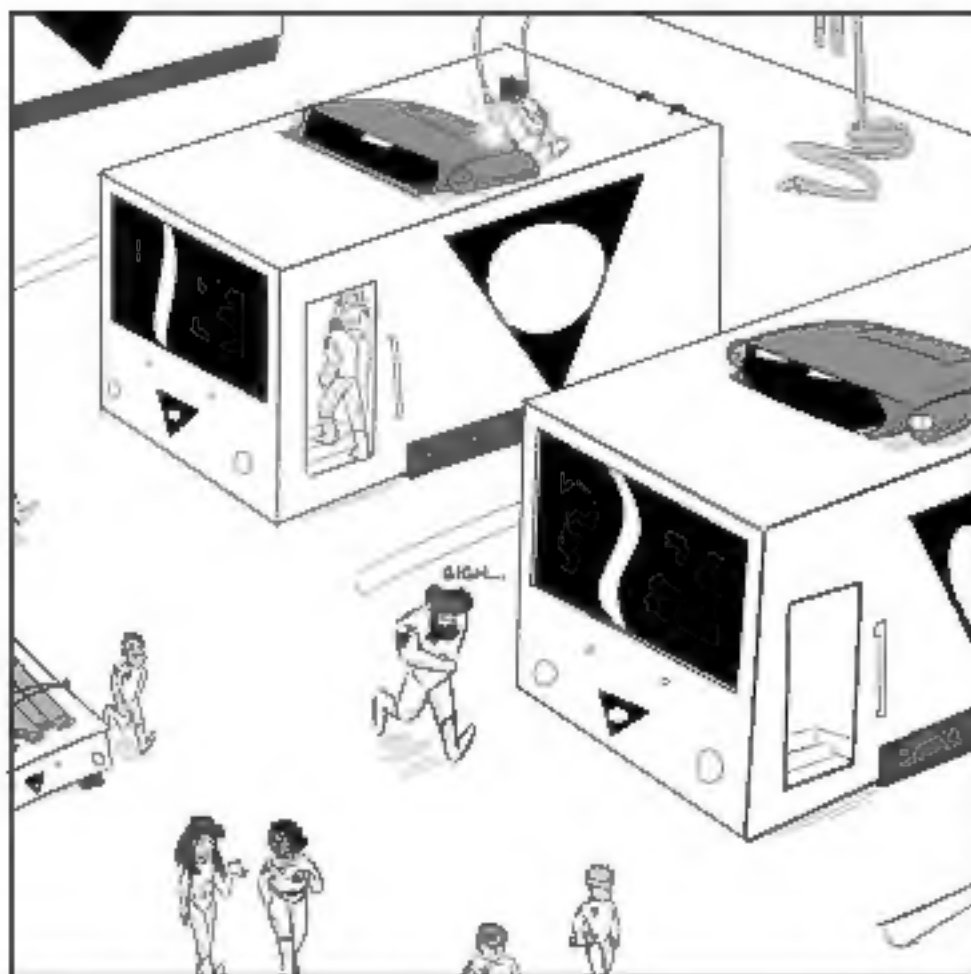
YEAH, IT DIDN'T BREACH. SUE SAID AS MUCH WHEN
SHE DID HIS SUIT SCAN AFTER THAT MUTANT ATTACK.

LOOK, HOW ABOUT I CHECK INTO THIS WHILE YOU
HEAD ON OUT YOURSELF BERNARD.



KEEP TO THE **SAFE ZONES** MARKED IN YOUR
PT, THE MISSION IS ONLY A SURVEY RIGHT NOW.





**PT DOCK ALL-CLEAR! ALL PT UNITS PLEASE
PROCEED TO EXIT DOOR.**

SIGH...

YOU SEEM UPSET, BERNARD.

**NONE OF THIS FEELS RIGHT TO ME BUE.
I JUST HAVE THIS *BAD* FEELING...**

OPENING PT DOCK EXIT DOOR. STAND BY.

**APEX WOULD LIKE TO REMIND ALL UNITS
THAT YOUR WORK IS ALWAYS APPRECIATED!**